

THE MEANING OF ICONS

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FOREWORD

The art of icons is a sacred art in the true sense of the word. It is nourished wholly on the spiritual truth to which it gives pictorial expression. For this reason it is often inadequately and faultily judged, when approached from outside with criteria borrowed from profane and purely human art. No one will better interpret it than a man whose mind is rooted in the same spirit. These are the basic considerations which have determined the composition of this book.

Most works on art place historical development in the foreground; they analyse the interplay of ethnic and geographical influences, which bear upon the art in question, and seek thereby to explain the art itself, whilst the intellectual content of pictorial representation plays a subordinate role. In the art of icons, however, it is the content that is the criterion of form. The conscious and established doctrinal character of this art determines not only the iconography, but also its artistic form and general style. This is possible only because the meaning of an icon touches a centre so near man's essence that it governs virtually all aspects of the work of art, from its didactic elements to the imponderables of artistic inspiration.

It is otherwise in profane art, where the subject of a picture forms only an occasion for the artist to express his own genius, which may be more vital than the subject chosen, and which derives its richness from elsewhere.

A sacred art has, through its very content, access to a living and truly inexhaustible source. Hence, it is in its nature to remain true to itself, even where a particular artist has not fully realised the spiritual depth of a given subject, and so does not draw direct from the spring of holiness, but only reflects more or less of that light which is comprehended in sacred forms sanctioned through traditional rules.

This had to be stated clearly at the start, in order to justify the form of presentation of this book. In his introduction Leonid Ouspensky outlines the theological background in relation to icons and shows their close affinity to the experiences of contemplative life. But since ultimately everything depends on the reality of the Tradition, it was essential for its understanding to have also a fundamental elucidation of the latter's nature. Hence the introductory essay by Vladimir Lossky was put first, even though it may make the greatest demand on readers untrained in theology. From this presentation of the spiritual premises of icons, an insight into the historical development of this art emerges almost spontaneously. Fundamentally the icon remains always the same; changes of style arise from the meeting between the timeless spirit of Tradition and circumstances conditioned by time and place, which merely cause the unfolding of diverse potentialities, latent in the nature of the icon itself. The emphasis in this book as regards historical review lies on Russian iconography, which not only is the best explored, but also represents the peak of the whole art; Leonid Ouspensky says rightly that just as Byzantium brought theology to a certain perfection in words, Russia has done likewise in pictures. The technique of iconography, which cannot be separated from its spiritual meaning, is given a separate chapter.

The second part of the book is concerned with the typology of icons: the principal traditional compositions are illustrated by means of typical examples and based on references to Holy Scripture. Such a method agrees with the fundamental mode of approach indicated above; and in keeping with this the reproductions of the icons have been arranged not chronologically but according to the "tchin" (or order) assigned to the themes on the Iconostasis.[1] *A description of the most important iconographical types serves, besides, to meet a general and growing need. In contrast to a predominantly sentimental interpretation of pictures, which one so often sees coupled with pseudo-mystical sayings, it is to wisdom itself, as contained in theological and liturgical writings, that this book seeks to give expression. Precisely because spiritual realities, which in the last analysis are our concern here, do not permit of being captured completely either in pictures or in words, the juxtaposition of visible symbol and written doctrine can give the most powerful help towards realising in anticipation the source from which springs the inspiration of both forms of expression.—Nothing would be more presumptuous than to wish to replace traditional wisdom with the standpoint of modern psychology, which is quite out of place here. There is just as little possibility of grasping spiritual content psychologically, as of explaining psychologically the essence of beauty.*

The examples of icons reproduced were chosen for their truth to tradition, truth expressed both by the iconographical canon and by their spiritual spontaneity. It was not by chance that in most cases Russian icons of a comparatively early period were chosen. The hieratic strictness of iconography has

[1] The screen, decorated with icons, dividing the Sanctuary from the nave in an Orthodox church. See ch. 5 below.

nothing akin with crude awkwardness, even if sometimes the spiritual appears to clothe itself in the child-like.

Contingent circumstances influenced the choice of icons, in that virtually only those works were accessible for reproduction which to-day are in Western Europe, Greece and America. Nevertheless, an advantage lay in this limitation, since most of the icons published elsewhere constitute the repetition of certain well-known examples, mostly from Russian museums, whereas this volume reproduces a number of unknown, or very little known, icons of good style.—Examples of equal merit could not be found of all "classical" compositions, nor was it possible to make a quite faultless reproduction of every icon chosen.

It need hardly be said that both the authors of this book themselves have lived and worked within the spiritual framework that conforms with the art of icons. Leonid Ouspensky has himself earned merit as an iconographer in the actual practice of iconography. Vladimir Lossky is well known for his studies on the mystical theology of the Eastern Church.[1]

TITUS BURCKHARDT

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

This second edition of *The Meaning of Icons* has been produced with the active cooperation of Professor Leonid A. Ouspensky. It contains sixteen new plates and a number of illustrations in color, which, in the previous edition, appeared in black-and-white. The text referring to new illustrative material has been appropriately modified, and several other adjustments and corrections have been made.

Indices of plates and illustrations have been added, as well as a select bibliography.

St. Vladimir's Seminary Press expresses its gratitude to The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Castle De Wijenburgh, Echteld, Netherlands; Christies, New York; National Museum, Paris; Benaki Museum, Athens; The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston; Dr. Hans Skrobucha of The Icon Museum, Recklinghausen; Robert and Hetty Roozemond; Dr. John Sinsky; Dr. Siegfried Amberg; Mr. Paul Schaffer of A La Vielle Russie; and a special appreciation to Mr. Richard Temple of The Temple Gallery in London for his advice and assistance.

[1] See for example *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (and other works), St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1976.

Note.—*The Old Testament quotations have been taken from the English version of the Septuagint; for the New Testament the Authorized Version was used.*



Tradition (*παράδοσις*, *traditio*) is one of those terms which, through being too rich in meanings, runs the risk of finally having none. This is not only due to a secularisation, which has depreciated so many words of the theological vocabulary—"spirituality", "mystic", "communion"—detaching them from their Christian context in order to make of them the current coin of profane language. If the word "tradition" has suffered the same fate, this has happened all the more easily because even in the language of theology itself this term sometimes remains somewhat vague. In effect, if one tries to avoid mutilating the idea of tradition by eliminating some of the meanings which it can comprise, but attempts to keep them all, one finds oneself reduced to definitions which embrace too many things at a time and no longer seize what constitutes the real meaning of "tradition".

As soon as precision is desired the over-abundant content has to be broken up, and a group of narrow concepts created, the sum of which is far from expressing that living reality called the Tradition of the Church. A reading of the erudite work of Father A. Deneffe, *Der Traditionsbegriff*[1], raises the question whether tradition is capable of being expressed in concepts, or indeed whether, as with all that is "life", it "overflows the intelligence" and would have to be described rather than defined. There are, in fact, in some theologians of the romantic epoch, such as Möhler in Germany or Khomiakov in Russia, beautiful pages of description, in which tradition appears as a catholic plenitude, and cannot be distinguished from the unity, the catholicity ("*Sobornost*" of Khomiakov), the apostolicity or the consciousness of the Church possessing the immediate certitude of revealed truth.

Faced with these descriptions, faithful in their general line to the image of the Tradition in the patristic writings of the first centuries, one is anxious to recognise the character of "pleroma" belonging to the tradition of the Church, but cannot all the same renounce the necessity of drawing distinctions, which is imposed on all dogmatic theology. To distinguish does not always mean to separate, nor even to oppose. In opposing Tradition to Holy Scripture as two sources of Revelation, the polemicists of the Counter-Reformation put themselves from the start on the same ground as their Protestant adversaries, having tacitly recognised in Tradition a reality other than that of Scripture. Instead of being the *ὑπόθεσις*[2] itself of the sacred books, their fundamental coherence due to the living breath passing through them, transforming their letter into "a unique body of truth", Tradition would appear as something added, as an external principle in relation to Scripture. Henceforth, the patristic texts which attributed a character of "pleroma" to the Holy Scripture[3] became incomprehensible, whilst the Protestant doctrine of the "sufficiency of Scripture" received a negative meaning, by the exclusion of all that is "Tradition". The defenders of Tradition saw themselves obliged to prove the necessity of union between two juxtaposed realities, each of which remained insufficient alone. Hence a series of false problems like that of the primacy of Scripture or of Tradition, of their respective authority, of the total or partial difference of their content, etc. ... How is the necessity of knowing the Scripture in the Tradition to be proved, how is their unity which was ignored in separating them to be found again? If the two are "fulness", there could be no question of two "pleromas" opposed to one another, but of two modalities of one and the same fulness of the Revelation communicated to the Church.

A distinction which separates or divides is never perfect nor sufficiently radical: it does not allow one to discern, in its purity, the difference of the unknown term, which it opposes to another that is supposed to be known. Separation is at the same time more and less than a distinction: it juxtaposes two objects detached from one another, but in order to do this it must first of all lend to one the characteristics of the other. In seeking here to juxtapose Scripture and Tradition as two independent sources of Revelation, Tradition is inevitably endowed with qualities which belong to Scripture: it will be the ensemble of "other writings" or of unwritten "other words", that is, all that the Church can add to the Scripture on the horizontal plane of her history. There will thus be on the one hand the Scripture or the Scriptural canon, and on the other hand the Tradition of the Church, which in its turn can be divided into several sources of Revelation of unequal value: acts of Oecumenical or local Councils, writings of the Fathers, canonical institutions, liturgy, iconography, devotional practices, etc. ... But then could this

[1] In the collection *Münsterische Beiträge zur Theologie*, vol. 18 (Münster, 1931).

[2] The expression is from Saint Irenaeus *Adv. Haer.*, 1, 1, 15–20.

[3] See the article of Father Louis Bouyer, *The Fathers of the Church on Tradition and Scripture*, in Eastern Churches Quarterly, VII (1947), special number on Tradition and Scripture.

still be called the "Tradition" and would it not be more exact to say, with the theologians of the Council of Trent, "the traditions"? This plural well expresses what is meant when, having separated Scripture and Tradition instead of distinguishing them, the latter is projected on to the written or oral testimonies which are added to the Holy Scripture, accompanying or following it. Just as "time projected in space" presents an obstacle to the intuition of Bergsonian "duration", so too this projection of the qualitative notion of Tradition in the quantitative domain of the "traditions" disguises rather than reveals its real character, for Tradition is free of all determination, which in limiting situates it historically.

An advance will be made towards a purer notion of Tradition, if this term is reserved to designate solely the oral transmission of the truths of faith. The separation between Tradition and Scripture will still subsist, but instead of isolating two sources of Revelation, one will oppose two modes of transmitting it: oral preaching and writing. It will then be necessary to put in one category the preaching of the Apostles and of their successors, as well as all preaching of the faith practised by a living ministery; and in the other category, the Holy Scripture and all other written expressions of the revealed Truth (these latter differing in the degree of their authority recognised by the Church). This approach affirms the primacy of Tradition over Scripture, since the oral transmission of the Apostles' preaching preceded its written recording in the canon of the New Testament. It will even be said: the Church could dispense with the Scriptures, but she could not exist without the Tradition. This is just only up to a certain point: it is true that the Church always possesses the revealed Truth, which she makes manifest by preaching, and which could have equally well remained oral and passed from mouth to mouth, without ever having been fixed by writing.[1] But however much the separability of Scripture and Tradition is affirmed, they have not yet been radically distinguished: one remains on the surface, opposing books written with ink to discourses uttered with the living voice. In both cases it is a question of the word that is preached: "the preaching of the faith" here serves as the common foundation, which qualifies the opposition. But is not that to attribute to Tradition something which still makes it akin to Scripture? Is it not possible to go further in search of the pure notion of Tradition?

Amongst the variety of meanings that can be noted in the Fathers of the first centuries, Tradition sometimes receives that of a teaching kept secret, not divulged, lest the mystery be profaned by the uninitiate.[2] This is clearly expressed by St. Basil, in the distinction which he makes between *δόγμα* and *κήρυγμα*.[3] "Dogma" here has a sense contrary to that given to this term to-day: far from being a doctrinal definition loudly proclaimed by the Church, it is a "teaching" (*διδασκαλία*) unpublished and secret, that our fathers kept in silence, free from disquiet and curiosity, well knowing that in being silent one safeguards the sacred character of the mysteries.[4] On the other hand the *κήρυγμα* (which means "preaching" in the language of the New Testament) is always an open declaration, whether it be a doctrinal definition[5], the official prescription of an observance[6], a canonical act[7] or public prayers of the Church.[8] Although they call to mind the "doctrina arcana" of the Gnostics, who also lay claim to a hidden apostolic tradition[9], the unwritten and secret traditions of which St. Basil speaks differ from it notably. Firstly, the examples that he gives in the passage that we have mentioned show that St. Basil's expressions relating to the "mysteries" do not concern an esoteric circle of a few perfect men in the interior of the Christian community, but rather the ensemble of the faithful participating in the sacramental life of the Church, who are here opposed to the "uninitiate", those whom a progressive catechism must prepare for the sacraments of initiation. Secondly, the secret tradition (*δόγμα*) can be declared publicly and thus become "preaching" (*κήρυγμα*) when a necessity (for example the struggle against a

[1] Saint Irenaeus envisages this possibility: *Adv. Haer.* III, 4, 1.

[2] Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, VI, 61 (Stählin, 462).

[3] St. Basil, *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*, XXVII: P.G. 32, Coll. 188A-193A, or *On the Holy Spirit*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981.

[4] Ibid., coll. 188C-189A.

[5] St. Basil (Letter 51, ibid., col. 392C) calls *ὁμοούσιος* "the great declaration of piety (*τὸ μέγα τῆς εὐσεβείας κήρυγμα*) which has made manifest the doctrine (*δόγμα*) of salvation" (Cf. Letter 125, ibid., col. 548B).

[6] Homily on fasting. P.G. 31, col. 185C.

[7] Letter 251. P.G. 32, col. 933B.

[8] Letter 155. Ibid., col. 612C.

[9] Ptolemaeus, *Letter to Flora*, VII, 9. Ed. Sources Chrétiennes, vol. 24, p. 66.

heresy) obliges the Church to make its pronouncement.[1] So, if the traditions received from the Apostles remain unwritten and subject to the discipline of secrecy, if the faithful did not always know their mysterious meaning[2], this is due to the wise economy of the Church, which surrenders its mysteries only to the extent that their open declaration becomes indispensable. One is here faced with one of the antinomies of the Gospels: on the one hand one must not give what is holy to the dogs, nor cast pearls before swine (Matt. vii, 6), on the other hand "there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known" (Matt. x, 26; Luke xii, 2). The "traditions guarded in silence and in mystery", that St. Basil opposes to oral preaching in public, make one think of the words that were told "in darkness", "in the ear", "in closets", but which will be spoken "in light", "upon the house-tops" (Matt. x, 27; Luke xii, 3).

It is no longer an opposition between the *ἄγραφα* and the *ἔγγραφα*, oral preaching and written preaching. The distinction between Tradition and Scripture here penetrates further into the heart of its subject, ranging on the one side that which is kept in secret, and for this reason must not be recorded in writing, and on the other, all that is the subject of preaching and that, once having been publicly declared, can henceforth be ranged on the side of the "Scriptures" (*Γραφαί*). Did not Basil himself judge it opportune to reveal in writing the secret of several "traditions", thus transforming them into *κηρύγματα*?[3] This new distinction puts the accent on the secret character of the Tradition, by thus opposing a hidden fund of oral teachings, received from the Apostles, to that which the Church offers for the knowledge of all; hence it immerses "preaching" in a sea of apostolic traditions, that could not be set aside or under-estimated without injury to the Gospel. Even more, if one did this "one would transform the teaching that is preached (*τὸ κήρυγμα*) into a simple name", devoid of meaning.[4] The several examples of these traditions offered by St. Basil all relate to the sacramental and liturgical life of the Church (sign of the Cross, baptismal rites, blessing of oil, eucharistic epiclesis, the custom of turning towards the east during prayer and that of remaining standing on Sunday and during the period of Pentecost, etc.). If these "unwritten customs" (*τὰ ἄγραφα τῶν ἐθῶν*), these "mysteries of the Church" (*ἄγραφα τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μυστήρια*), so numerous that one could not expound them in the course of a whole day[5], are necessary for understanding the truth of the Scripture (and in general the true meaning of all "preaching"), it is clear that the secret traditions point to the "mysterial character" of Christian knowledge. In effect, the revealed truth is not a dead letter but a living Word: it can be attained only in the Church, through initiation by the "mysteries" or sacraments[6] into the "mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints" (Col. i, 26).

The unwritten traditions or mysteries of the Church, mentioned by St. Basil, constitute then the boundary with Tradition properly so-called, and they give glimpses of some of its features. In effect, there is participation in the revealed mystery through the fact of sacramental initiation. It is a new knowledge, a "gnosis of God" (*γνῶσις Θεοῦ*) that one receives as grace, and this gift of gnosis is conferred in a "tradition" which is, for St. Basil, the confession of the Trinity at the time of baptism: a sacred formula which leads us into light.[7] Here the horizontal line of the "traditions" received from the mouth of the Lord and transmitted by the Apostles and their successors crosses with the vertical, with the *Tradition*—the communication of the Holy Spirit, which opens to members of the Church an infinite perspective of mystery in each word of the revealed Truth. Starting from traditions such as St. Basil presents to us, it is then necessary to go further and admit the *Tradition*, which is distinguished from them.

In fact, if one stops at the boundary of the unwritten and secret traditions, without making the last distinction, one will still remain on the horizontal plane of the *παραδόσεις*, where *Tradition* appears to us as "projected into the realm of the Scriptures". It is true that it would be impossible to separate these secret traditions from the

[1] The example of *ὁμοούσιος* is typical in this sense. The economy of St. Basil on the subject of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit is explained not only by a pedagogue's care, but also by this conception of the secret tradition.

[2] St. Basil, *Treatise on the Holy Spirit*, ibid., coll. 189C–192A.

[3] Ibid. coll., 192A–193A.

[4] Ibid. col., 188AB.

[5] Ibid. coll., 188A; 192C–193A.

[6] On the identification of these two terms and on the "mysterial" meaning of the sacraments in the writers of the first centuries, see Dom Odo Casel, *Das christliche Kultusmysterium* (Regensburg, 1932), p. 105 et seq.

[7] St. Basil, ibid. (X), col. 113B.

Scriptures, or more generally, from "preaching", but one could always oppose them as words spoken in secret or guarded in silence and words declared publicly. The fact is that the final distinction has not yet been made so long as there remains a last element which links Tradition with Scripture—the *word*, which serves as the foundation for opposing hidden traditions to open preaching. In order to isolate the pure notion of Tradition, in order to strip it of all that is its projection on the horizontal line of the Church, it would be necessary to go beyond the opposition of secret words and words preached aloud, ranging together "the traditions" and "preaching". These two have this in common that, secret or not, they are none the less expressed by word. They always imply a verbal expression, whether it is a question of words properly so-called, pronounced or written, or whether of the dumb language which is addressed to the understanding by visual manifestation (iconography, ritual gestures, etc.). Taken in this general sense, the word is not uniquely an external sign used to designate a concept, but above all a content, which is defined intelligibly and declared in assuming a body, in being incorporated in articulate discourse or in any other form of external expression.

If such is the nature of the word, nothing of what is revealed and makes itself known can remain strange to it. Whether it be the Scriptures, preaching or the "apostles' traditions guarded in silence" the same word *λόγος* or *λογία* can equally be applied to all that constitutes expression of the revealed Truth. In fact, this word ceaselessly recurs in patristic literature to designate equally the Holy Scripture and the Symbols of faith. Thus, St. John Cassian says on the subject of the symbol of Antioch: "It is the abridged word (*breviatum verbum*) that the Lord has given... contracting into a few words the faith of His Testaments, in order to contain briefly the meaning of all the Scriptures."[1] If one next reflects that the Scriptures are not a collection of words about God, but the Word of God (*λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ*), one will understand why, above all since Origen, there has been the desire to identify the presence of the Divine Logos in the writings of the two Testaments with the Incarnation of the Word, by which the Scriptures were "accomplished". Well before Origen, St. Ignatius of Antioch refused to see in the Scriptures nothing but an historical document, "archives", and to justify the Gospel by the texts of the Old Testament, declaring: "For me, my archives, they are Jesus Christ; my inviolable archives are His Cross and His Death and His Resurrection, and the Faith which comes from Him... He is the Door of the Father, by which enter in Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the prophets, and the Apostles, and the Church."[2] If by the fact of the Incarnation of the Word the Scriptures are not archives of the Truth, but its living body, the Scriptures can be possessed only within the Church, which is the unique body of Christ. Once again one returns to the idea of the sufficiency of the Scripture. But here there is nothing negative: it does not exclude, but assumes the Church with its sacraments, institutions and teachings transmitted by the Apostles. Nor does this sufficiency, this "pleroma" of the Scripture, exclude any other expressions of the same Truth that the Church will be able to produce (just as the fulness of Christ, the Head of the Church, does not exclude the Church—the complement of His glorious humanity). One knows that the defenders of the holy images founded the possibility of Christian iconography on the fact of the Incarnation of the Word: icons, just as well as the Scriptures, are expressions of the inexpressible, and have become possible thanks to the revelation of God, which was accomplished in the Incarnation of the Son. The same holds good for the dogmatic definitions, the exegesis, the liturgy, for all that, in the Church of Christ, participates in the same fulness of the Word as is contained by the Scriptures, without thereby being limited or reduced. In this "totalitarian" quality of the incarnate Word, all that expresses the revealed truth is then related to the Scripture and, if all were in fact to become "scripture", "the world itself could not contain the books that should be written" (John xxi, 25). But since the expression of the transcendent mystery has become possible by the fact of the Incarnation of the Word, since all that expresses it becomes in some sort "scripture" beside the Holy Scripture, the question arises as to where finally is the Tradition that we have sought by detaching progressively its pure notion from all that can relate it to the scriptural reality?

As we have said, it is not to be sought on the horizontal lines of the "traditions" which, just as much as the Scripture, are determined by the Word. If again we

[1] "Hoc est ergo breviatum verbum quod fecit Dominus... fidem scilicet duplicis Testamenti sui in pauca colligens, et sensum omnium Scripturarum in brevia concludens" (De incarn., VI, 3: P.L. 50, col. 149A). The "breviatum verbum" is an allusion to Rom. ix, 27, which in its turn quotes Isaiah x, 22. Cf. St. Augustine, *De Symbolo*, I: P.L. 40, col. 628; St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catech.* V, 12: P.G. 33, col. 521 AB.

[2] *To the Philadelphians*, VIII, 2, and IX, 1 Sources Chrétiennes, 10, 2nd ed., p. 150.

wished to oppose it to all that belongs to the reality of the Word, it would be necessary to say that the Tradition is Silence. "He who possesses in truth the word of Jesus can hear even its silence (*τῆς ἡσυχίας αὐτοῦ ἀκούειν*)", says St. Ignatius of Antioch.[1] As far as I know this text has never been used in the numerous studies which quote patristic passages on the Tradition in abundance, always the same passages, known by everyone, but with never a warning that texts in which the word "tradition" is not expressly mentioned can be more eloquent than many others.

The faculty of hearing the silence of Jesus, attributed by St. Ignatius to those who in truth possess His word, echoes the reiterated appeal of Christ to His hearers: "he that hath ears to hear, let him hear." The words of Revelation have then a margin of silence which cannot be picked up by the ears of those who are outside. St. Basil moves in the same direction when he says, in his passage on the traditions: "There is also a form of silence namely the obscurity used by the Scripture, in order to make it difficult to gain understanding of the teachings, for the profit of readers."[2] This silence of the Scriptures could not be detached from them: it is transmitted by the Church with the words of the Revelation, as the very condition of their reception. If it could be opposed to the words (always on the horizontal plane, where they express the revealed Truth), this silence which accompanies the words implies no kind of insufficiency or lack of fulness of the Revelation, nor the necessity to add to it anything whatever. It signifies that the revealed mystery, to be truly received as fulness, demands a conversion towards the vertical plane, in order that one may be able to "comprehend with all saints" not only what is the "breadth and length" of the Revelation, but also its "depth "and its "height" (Eph. iii, 18).

At the point which we have reached, we can no longer oppose Scripture and Tradition, nor juxtapose them as two distinct realities. We must, however, distinguish them, the better to seize their indivisible unity, which lends to the Revelation given to the Church its character of fulness. If the Scriptures and all that the Church can produce in words written or pronounced, in images or in symbols liturgical or otherwise, represent the differing modes of expression of the Truth, Tradition is the unique mode of receiving it. We say specifically *unique mode*, and not *uniform mode*, for to Tradition in its pure notion there belongs nothing formal. It does not impose on human consciousness by formal guarantees of the truths of faith, but gives access to the discovery of their inner evidence. It is not the content of Revelation, but the light that reveals it; it is not the word, but the living breath which makes the word heard at the same time as the silence from which it came[3]; it is not the Truth, but a communication of the Spirit of Truth, outside which the Truth cannot be received. "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. xii, 3). The pure notion of Tradition can then be defined by saying that it is the life of the Holy Spirit in the Church, communicating to each member of the Body of Christ the faculty of hearing, of receiving, of knowing the Truth in the Light which belongs to it, and not according to the light of human reason. This is true gnosis owed to an action of the Divine Light (*Φωτισμὸς τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ Θεοῦ*–2 Cor. iv, 6), the unique Tradition, independent of all "philosophy", of all that lives by the "tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. ii, 8). This freedom from every condition of nature, every contingency of history, is the first characteristic of the vertical line of the Tradition: it is inherent in Christian gnosis—"Ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free" (John viii, 32). One cannot know the Truth nor understand the words of the Revelation without having received the Holy Spirit; "But where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii, 17).[4] This liberty of the children of God, opposed to the slavery of the sons of this world, is expressed by the "frankness" (*παρρησία*), with which those can address God who know Him whom they worship, for they worship the Father "in Spirit and in Truth" (John iv, 23, 24).

Wishing to distinguish Tradition from Scripture, we have sought to strip the notion of all that could make it akin to scriptural reality. We have had to distinguish it from the "traditions", ranking these latter, together with the Scriptures and all expressions of the Truth, on the same horizontal line where we have found no other name to designate it than that of Silence. When therefore Tradition has been detached from all that could receive its projection on the horizontal plane, it is necessary to

[1] *To the Ephesians*, XV, 2 Sources Chrétiennes, 10, 2nd ed., p. 84.

[2] Op. cit., col. 189 BC.

[3] Cf. St. Ignatius of Antioch, *To the Magnesians*, VIII, 2 Sources Chrétiennes, 10, 2nd ed., p. 102.

[4] See St. Basil's interpretation of this text, op. cit. XX, coll. 164C–165C.

enter another dimension in order to reach the term of our analysis. Contrary to analyses such as philosophy since Plato and Aristotle conceives them, and which end in dissolving the concrete by resolving it into general ideas or conceptions, our analysis leads us finally towards the Truth and the Spirit, the Word and the Holy Spirit, two Persons, distinct but indissolubly united, Whose twofold economy, whilst founding the Church, conditions at the same time the indissoluble and distinct character of Scripture and of Tradition.

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The culmination of our analysis—Incarnate Word and Holy Spirit in the Church, as the twofold condition of the fulness of the Revelation—will serve us as a turntable from which to set forth now on the way of synthesis and to assign to Tradition the place which belongs to it in the concrete realities of ecclesiastical life. It will first of all be necessary to establish a double reciprocity in the economy of the two Divine Persons sent by the Father. On the one hand, it is by the Holy Spirit that the Word is made incarnate of the Virgin Mary. On the other hand, it is by the Word, following His Incarnation and work of Redemption, that the Holy Spirit descends on the members of the Church at Pentecost. In the first case, the Holy Spirit comes first, but with a view to the Incarnation, in order that the Virgin may be able to conceive the Son of God, come to be made Man. The role of the Holy Spirit is here then functional: He is the power of the Incarnation, the virtual condition of the reception of the Word. In the second case, it is the Son Who comes first, for He sends the Holy Spirit Who comes from the Father, but it is the Holy Spirit, Who plays the principal role: It is He Who is the aim, for He is communicated to the members of the Body of Christ, in order to deify them by grace. So here the role of the Incarnate Word is, in its turn, functional in relation to the Spirit: It is the form, so to speak, the "canon" of sanctification, formal condition of the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The true and holy Tradition, according to Philaret of Moscow, "does not consist uniquely in visible and verbal transmission of the teachings, the rules, institutions and rites: it is at the same time an invisible and actual communication of grace and of sanctification."[1] If it is necessary to distinguish what is transmitted (the oral and written traditions) and the unique mode according to which this transmission is received in the Holy Spirit (Tradition as the principle of Christian knowledge), it will none the less be impossible to separate these two points; hence the ambivalence of the term "tradition", which designates simultaneously the horizontal line and the vertical line of the Truth possessed by the Church. Every transmission of a truth of faith implies then a communication of the grace of the Holy Spirit. In effect, outside of the Spirit Who "spake by the prophets", that which is transmitted cannot be recognised by the Church as word of Truth, word akin to the sacred books inspired by God and, together with the Holy Scriptures, "recapitulated" by the Incarnate Word. This wind of Pentecostal fire, communication of the Spirit of Truth proceeding from the Father and sent by the Son, actualises the supreme faculty of the Church: the consciousness of revealed Truth, the possibility of judging and of discerning between true and false in the Light of the Holy Spirit: "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us" (Acts xv, 28). If the Paraclete is the unique Criterion of the Truth revealed by the Incarnate Word, He is also the principle of the Incarnation, for the same Holy Spirit by Whom the Virgin Mary received the faculty of becoming Mother of God, acts as function of the Word as a power for expressing the Truth in intelligible definitions or sensible images and symbols, documents of the faith, of which the Church will have to judge whether or not they belong to its Tradition.

These considerations are necessary to enable us to find again, in concrete cases, the relationship between the Tradition and the revealed Truth, received and expressed by the Church. As we have seen, Tradition in its primary notion is not the revealed content, but the unique mode of receiving the Revelation, a faculty owed to the Holy Spirit, which renders the Church apt to know the Incarnate Word in its relationship with the Father (supreme gnosis which is Theology, in the proper meaning of this word, for the Fathers of the first centuries) as well as the mysteries of the Divine Economy, from the creation of heaven and earth of Genesis, to the new heaven and new earth of the Apocalypse. Recapitulated by the Incarnation of the Word, the history of the Divine Economy will make itself known by the Scriptures, in the recapitulation of the two Testaments by the same Word. But this unity of the Scriptures could be recognised only in the Tradition, in the Light of the Holy Spirit communicated to the members of the unique Body of Christ. The books of the Old Testament, composed over a

[1] Quoted by G. Florovsky, in *The Ways of Russian Theology*, Nordland Publishing Company, p. 214.

period of several centuries, written by different authors who have often brought together and fused different religious traditions, have only an accidental, mechanical unity for the eyes of the historian of religions. Their unity with the writings of the New Testament will appear to him factitious and artificial. But a son of the Church will be able to recognise the unity of inspiration and the unique object of the faith in these heteroclitic writings, woven by the same Spirit Who, after having spoken by the prophets, preceded the Word in rendering the Virgin Mary apt to serve as means for the Incarnation of God.

It is only in the Church that one will be able to recognise in full consciousness the unity of inspiration of the sacred books, because the Church alone possesses the Tradition—the knowledge in the Holy Spirit of the Word Incarnate. The fact that the Canon of the writings of the New Testament was formed relatively late, with some hesitations, shows us that the Tradition is in no way automatic: it is the condition of the Church having an infallible consciousness, but it is not a mechanism which will infallibly make known the Truth, outside and above the consciousness of individuals, outside all deliberation and all judgment. In fact, if the Tradition is a faculty of judging in the Light of the Holy Spirit, it obliges those who wish to know the Truth in the Tradition to make incessant efforts: one does not remain in the Tradition by a certain historical inertia, in keeping as a "tradition received from the Fathers" all that which, by force of habit, flatters a certain devout sensibility. On the contrary, it is by substituting "traditions" of those kinds for the Tradition of the Holy Spirit living in the Church, that one runs most risk of finding oneself finally outside the Body of Christ. It must not be thought that the conservative attitude alone is salutary, nor that heretics are always "innovators". If the Church, after having established the Canon of Scripture, conserves it in the Tradition, this conservation is not static and inert, but dynamic and conscious—in the Holy Spirit, Who purifies anew "the oracles of the Lord", "pure oracles: as silver... proved in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" (Ps. xii, 6). If that were lacking, it would have conserved only a dead text, witness of an ended epoch, and not the living vivifying Word, perfect expression of the Revelation that it possesses independently of the existence of old discordant manuscripts or of new "critical editions" of the Bible.

One can say that the "Tradition" represents the critical spirit of the Church. But, contrary to the "critical spirit" of human science, the critical judgment of the Church is made acute by the Holy Spirit. It will have then a quite different principle: that of the undiminished fulness of Revelation. Thus the Church, which will have to correct the inevitable alterations of the sacred texts (that certain "traditionalists" wish to preserve at any price, sometimes attributing a mystical meaning to the stupid mistakes of copyists), will be able at the same time to recognise in some late interpolations (for example, in the comma of the "three that bear record in heaven" in the first epistle of St. John) an authentic expression of the revealed Truth. Naturally authenticity has here a meaning quite other than it has in the historic disciplines.[1] Not only the Scriptures, but also the oral traditions received from the Apostles have been conserved only by virtue of the Tradition—the Light which reveals their true meaning and their significance, essential for the Church. Here more than elsewhere Tradition exercises its critical action, showing above all its negative and exclusive aspect: it rejects the "profane and old wives' fables" (1 Tim. iv, 7), piously received by all those whose "traditionalism" consists in accepting with unlimited credulity all that is insinuated into the life of the Church to remain there by force of habit.[2] At the epoch at which the oral traditions coming from the Apostles began to be fixed in writing, the true and the false traditions crystallise together in numerous apocrypha, several of which circulate under the names of the Apostles or other saints. "We are not ignorant" says Origen[3], "that many of these secret writings have been composed by impious men, from among those who make their iniquity sound loudest, and that some of these fictions are used by the 'Hypythiani', others, by the disciples of Basilides. We must then pay attention, in order not to receive all the apocrypha which circulate under the names of saints, for some have been composed by the Jews, perhaps to destroy the truth of our Scrip-

[1] Origen, in his homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews, after having expressed his views on the source of this Epistle, of which the teaching is Pauline but the style and composition denote an author other than St. Paul, adds this: "If then some Church considers this Epistle as written by St. Paul, let it be honoured also for that. For it is not by chance that the ancients have transmitted it under the name of Paul. But who wrote the Epistle? God knows the truth." (Fragment quoted by Eusebius, H.E. 1. VI, c. 25: P.G. 20, col. 584C.)

[2] In our days still, the literature of the Synaxaria and the Leimonaria offer similar examples, not to mention liturgical monstrosities which, for certain people, also receive a "traditional" and sacred character.

[3] *Commentary on Matthew*, series XXVIII: P.G. 13, col. 1637.

tures, and to establish false teachings. But on the other hand we must not reject as a whole all that is useful for throwing light on our Scriptures. It is a mark of greatness of spirit to hear and to apply these words of the Scripture: 'Prove all things; hold fast that which is good' (1 Thes. v, 21)." Since the deeds and the words that the memory of the Church has kept since apostolic times "in silence free of disquiet and of curiosity"[1] have been divulged in writings of heterodox origin, these apocrypha, though separated from the scriptural Canon, should none the less not be totally rejected. The Church will know how to extract from them some elements apt for completing or for illustrating events on which the Scriptures are silent, but that Tradition recognises as true. Further, amplifications having an apocryphal source will serve to colour the liturgical texts and the iconography of some feasts. One will use then apocryphal sources, with judgment and moderation, to the extent to which they may represent corrupted apostolic traditions. Recreated by the Tradition, these elements, purified and made legitimate, return to the Church as its own property. This judgment will be necessary each time that the Church has to do with writings claiming to belong to the apostolic tradition. She will reject them, or she will receive them, without necessarily posing the question of their authenticity on the historical plane, but considering above all their content in the light of the Tradition.

Sometimes a considerable labour of clarification and adaptation will be necessary, in order that a pseudographic work may be finally utilised by the Church as a witness of her Tradition. It is thus that Saint Maximus the Confessor had to make his commentary on the "Corpus dionysiacum", in order to uncover the orthodox meaning of these theological writings, which were circulating in monophysite circles under the pseudonym of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, adopted by their author or compiler. Without belonging to the "apostolic tradition" properly so-called, the dionysian Corpus belongs to the "patristic tradition", which continues that of the Apostles and of their disciples.[2] The same could be said of some other writings of this kind. As for the oral traditions claiming apostolic authority, above all in so far as concerns customs and institutions, the judgment of the Church will take account not only of their meaning, but also of the universality of their usage.

Let us note that the formal criterion of the traditions, expressed by Saint Vincent of Lerins: "Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus"—can only be applied in full to those apostolic traditions which were orally transmitted during two or three centuries. The New Testament Scriptures already escape from this rule, for they were neither "always", nor "everywhere", nor "received by all", before the definitive establishment of the scriptural Canon. Whatever may be said by those who forget the primary significance of Tradition, wishing to substitute for it a "rule of faith", the formula of Saint Vincent is still less applicable to the dogmatic definitions of the Church. It is enough to recall that the *ὁμοούσιος* was nothing less than "traditional"; with a few exceptions[3], it was never used anywhere or by anyone except by the valentinian gnostics and the heretic Paul of Samosate. The Church has transformed it into "pure oracles: as silver... proved in a furnace of earth, purified seven times" in the crucible of the Holy Spirit and of the free consciousness of those who judge within the Tradition, allowing themselves to be seduced by no habitual form, by no natural inclination of the flesh and the blood, which often assume the appearance of an unconsidered and obscure devotion.

The dynamism of the Tradition allows of no inertia either in the habitual forms of piety, or in the dogmatic expressions that are repeated mechanically like magic recipes of Truth, guaranteed by the authority of the

[1] St. Basil, op. cit., col. 188.

[2] It would be as false to deny the traditional character of the work of "Dionysius", by basing oneself on the fact of its non-apostolic origin, as to wish to attribute it to the convert of Saint Paul, on the pretext that these writings were received by the Church under the title of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite. Both these attitudes would equally reveal a lack of true consciousness of the Tradition.

[3] Before Nicaea, the term *ὁμοούσιος* is found in a fragment of the commentary of Origen to the Epistle to the Hebrews, quoted by Saint Pamphilius the Martyr (P.G. 14, col. 1308), also in the "Apology of Origen" by the same Pamphilius, translated by Rufinus (P.G. 17, coll. 580–581), and in the anonymous dialogue "On true faith in God", falsely attributed to Origen (ed. W. H. van de Sande Bakhuyzen, Leipzig, 1901, I, 2). According to Saint Athanasius, Saint Dionysius of Alexandria was accused, about 259–261, of not recognising that Christ is consubstantial with God; Dionysius is said to have replied that he avoided the word *ὁμοούσιος* which is not in the Scripture, but recognised the orthodox meaning of this expression (Saint Athanasius, *De sententia Dionysii*, No. 18: P.G. 25, col. 505). The treatise "On faith" where one finds the expression *ὁμοούσιος* in the Nicene sense (P.G. 10, col. 1128) does not belong to Saint Gregory of Neo-Cesaraea; it is a post-Nicene writing, probably of the end of the IVth century. Thus, the examples of the term *ὁμοούσιος* amongst the orthodox writers before Nicaea are for the most part uncertain: one cannot trust the translation of Rufinus. In any case the use of this term is very restricted and has an accidental character.

Church. To preserve the "dogmatic tradition" does not mean to be attached to doctrinal formulae: to be within the Tradition, is to keep the living truth in the Light of the Holy Spirit, or rather—it is to be kept in the Truth by the vivifying power of Tradition. But this power preserves by a ceaseless renewing, like all that comes from the Spirit.

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"To renew" does not mean to replace ancient expressions of the Truth by new ones, more explicit and theologically better elaborated. If that were so, we should have to recognise that the erudite Christianity of professors of theology represents a considerable progress in relation to the "primitive" faith of the disciples of the Apostles. In our days there is much talk of "theological development", often without taking account of the extent to which this expression (which has become almost a commonplace) can be ambiguous. In fact, it implies, among some modern authors, an evolutionary conception of the history of Christian dogma. Attempts are made to interpret in the sense of a "dogmatic progress" this passage of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus: "the Old Testament manifested clearly the Father and obscurely the Son. The New Testament manifested the Son, but gave only indications of the divinity of the Holy Spirit. Nowadays, the Spirit is amongst us and shows Himself in all His splendour. It would not have been prudent, before recognising the divinity of the Father, openly to preach the divinity of the Son, and as long as that of the Son had not been accepted, to impose the Holy Spirit, if I dare so express myself."[1] But "the Spirit is amongst us" since the day of Pentecost and, with Him, the light of the Tradition: that is to say, not only what has been transmitted (as would have been a sacred and inert "deposit"), but the very force of transmission conferred on the Church and accompanying all that is transmitted, as the unique mode of receiving and possessing the Revelation. However, the unique mode of having the Revelation in the Holy Spirit is to have it in fulness, and it is thus that the Church knows the Truth in the Tradition. If there was an increase in knowledge of the Divine mysteries, a progressive revelation, "light coming little by little", before the coming of the Holy Spirit, it is otherwise for the Church. If one can still speak of development, it is not knowledge of the Revelation in the Church which progresses or is developed with each dogmatic definition. If one were to embrace the whole account of doctrinal history from its beginnings down to our own days, by reading the Enchiridion of Denzinger or the fifty in-folio volumes of Mansi, the knowledge that one would thus have of the mystery of the Trinity would be no more perfect than was that of a Father of the IVth century who speaks of the *ὁμοούσιος*, nor than that of an antenicene Father who does not yet speak of it, nor than that of a Saint Paul, to whom even the term "Trinity" remains as yet strange. At every moment of its history the Church gives to its members the faculty of knowing the Truth in a fulness that the world cannot contain. It is this mode of knowing the living Truth in the Tradition that it defends in creating new dogmatic definitions.

"To know in fulness" does not mean "to have the fulness of knowledge"; this belongs only to the world to come. If Saint Paul says that he now knows "in part" (1 Cor. xiii, 12) this *ἐκ μέρους* does not exclude the fulness *in* which he knows. It is not later dogmatic development that will suppress the "knowledge in part" of Saint Paul, but the eschatological actualisation of the fulness in which, confusedly but surely, Christians here below know the mysteries of the Revelation. The knowledge *ἐκ μέρους* will not be suppressed because it was false, but because its role was merely to make us adhere to the fulness, which surpasses every human faculty of knowledge. Hence, it is in the light of the fulness that one knows "in part" and it is always through this fulness that the Church judges whether the partial knowledge expressed in such or such a doctrine belongs, or not, to Tradition. Any theological doctrine which pretends to be a perfect explanation of the revealed mystery will inevitably appear to be false: by the very fact of pretending to the fulness of knowledge it will set itself in opposition to the fulness, in which the Truth is known in part. A doctrine is traitor to Tradition when it seeks to take its place: gnosticism offers the striking example of an attempt to substitute for the dynamic fulness, given to the Church as the condition of true knowledge, a kind of static fulness of a "revealed doctrine". On the other hand, a dogma defined by the Church, in the form of partial knowledge, each time opens anew an access towards the fulness outside of which the revealed Truth can be neither known nor confessed. As an expression of truth, a dogma of faith belongs to the Tradition, without all the same constituting one of its "parts". It is a means, an intelligible instrument, which makes for adherence to the Tradition of the Church: it is a

[1] Discourse XXXI (5th theological), c. 26: P.G. 36, col. 101 C.

witness of Tradition, its external limit, or rather the narrow door which leads to knowledge of Truth in the Tradition.

Within the circle of dogma, the knowledge of the revealed mystery that a member of the Church will be able to attain, the degree of Christian "gnosis", will vary in proportion to the spiritual measure of each. This knowledge of the Truth in the Tradition will then be able to increase in a person, in company with his increase in sanctification (Col. i, 10): a Christian will be more perfect in knowledge at the age of his spiritual maturity. But would one dare to speak, against all the evidence, of a collective progress in the knowledge of the Christian mystery, a progress which would be due to a "dogmatic development" of the Church? Would this development have started in "gospel infancy" to end to-day—after a "patristic youth" and a "scholastic maturity"—in the sad senility of the manuals of theology? Or indeed should this metaphor (false, like so many others) give place to a vision of the Church like that which is to be found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, where it appears in the features of a woman young and old at the same time, bringing together all ages in the "measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv, 13)?

Returning to the text of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, so often misinterpreted, we shall see that the dogmatic development in question is in no way determined by an inner necessity, which would effect a progressive increase in the Church of the knowledge of revealed Truth. Far from being a kind of organic evolution, the history of dogma depends above all on the conscious attitude of the Church in face of the historical reality, in which she has to work for the salvation of men. If Gregory spoke of a progressive revelation of the Trinity before Pentecost, it is in order to insist on the fact that the Church, in her economy in relation to the external world, must follow the example of the divine pedagogy. In formulating these dogmas (cf. *κήρυγμα* in Saint Basil, see page 14 above), it must then conform to the necessities of a given moment; "not unveiling all things without delay and without discernment, and none the less keeping nothing hidden until the end. For the one would be imprudent and the other impious. The one would risk wounding those without, and the other separating us from our own brothers."[1]

In replying to the lack of understanding of the external world, which could not receive the Revelation, in resisting the attempts of the "disputers of this world" (1 Cor. i, 20) who, in the womb of the Church itself, seek to understand the Truth "after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. ii, 8), the Church finds herself obliged to express her faith in the form of dogmatic definitions, in order to defend it against the thrust of heresies. Imposed by the necessity of the struggle, dogmas once formulated by the Church become for the faithful a "rule of faith" which remain firm for ever, setting the boundary between orthodoxy and heresy, between knowledge within the Tradition and knowledge determined by natural factors. Always confronted with new difficulties to overcome, with new obstacles of thought to remove, the Church will always have to defend her dogmas. Her theologians will have the constant task of expounding and interpreting them anew according to the intellectual demands of the milieu or of the epoch. In the critical moments of the struggle for the integrity of the faith, the Church will have to proclaim new dogmatic definitions, which will mark new stages in this struggle, that will last until all arrive at "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God" (Eph. iv, 13). Having to struggle against new heresies, the Church never abandons her ancient dogmatic positions, in order to replace them by new definitions. These stages are never surpassed by an evolution and, far from being relegated to the archives of history, they preserve the character of the ever actual present in the living light of the Tradition. One will be able to speak then of dogmatic development only in a very limited sense: in formulating a new dogma the Church takes as her point of departure dogmas which already exist, and which constitute a rule of faith that she has in common with her adversaries. Thus, the dogma of Chalcedon makes use of that of Nicaea and speaks of the Son consubstantial with the Father in His Divinity, to say afterwards that He is also consubstantial with us in His humanity; against the monothelites, who in principle admitted the dogma of Chalcedon, the Fathers of the VIth Council

[1] Op. cit., c. 27: P.G. 36, col. 164B. It is known that Gregory of Nazianzus reproached his friend St. Basil for excess of prudence so far as concerns the open proclamation of the Divinity of the Holy Spirit, a truth which had the character of traditional evidence for members of the Church, but exacted a moderation in economy in respect of the "pneumatomachs", whom it was necessary to bring to the unity of the faith.

will again take up its formulae on the two natures, in order to affirm the two wills and the two energies of Christ; the Byzantine Councils of the XIVth century, in proclaiming the dogma on the Divine Energies will refer, amongst other things, to the definitions of the VIth Council, etc. In each case one can speak of a "dogmatic development" to the extent that the Church extends the rule of faith, whilst remaining, in her new definitions, in conformity with the dogmas already received by all.

If the rule of faith develops as the teaching ministry of the Church adds to it new acts having dogmatic authority, this development, which is subject to an "economy" and pre-supposes a knowledge of Truth in the Tradition, is not an augmentation of this latter. This is clear if one is willing to take account of all that has been said on the primordial notion of Tradition. It is the abuse of the term "tradition" (in the singular and without an adjective to qualify it and determine it) by authors who see only its projection on the horizontal plane of the Church, namely, that of the "traditions" (in the plural or with a qualification which defines them), it is above all a vexatious habit of designating by this term the ordinary teaching ministry—it is these which have allowed such frequent talk to be heard about a "development" or an "enriching" of tradition. The theologians of the VIIth Council distinguish clearly between the "Tradition of the Holy Spirit" and the divinely inspired "teaching (*διδασκαλία*) of our Holy Fathers".[1] They were able to define the new dogma "with all rigour and justice", because they considered themselves to be in the same Tradition as allowed the Fathers of past centuries to produce new expressions of the Truth whenever they had to reply to the necessities of the moment.

There exists an interdependence between the "Tradition of the catholic Church" (viz. the faculty of knowing the Truth in the Holy Spirit) and the "teaching of the Fathers" (viz. the rule of faith kept by the Church). One cannot belong to the Tradition whilst contradicting the dogmas, just as one cannot either make use of the dogmatic formulae received in order to oppose a formal "orthodoxy" to every new expression of the Truth that the life of the Church may produce. The first attitude is that of the revolutionary innovators, of the false prophets who sin against the expressed Truth, against the incarnate Word, in the name of the Spirit to which they lay claim. The second is that of the conservative formalists, the pharisees of the Church who, in the name of the habitual expressions of Truth, run the risk of sinning against the Spirit of Truth.

In distinguishing the Tradition, in which the Church knows the Truth, from the "dogmatic tradition" that she establishes by her teaching ministry and that she preserves, we find again the same relationship as we have been able to establish between Tradition and Scripture: one can neither confound them nor separate them, without depriving them of the character of fulness that they possess together. Like Scripture, dogmas *live* in the Tradition, with this difference that the scriptural Canon forms a determinate body which excludes all possibility of further increase, whilst the "dogmatic tradition", in keeping its stability as the "rule of faith", from which nothing can be cut off, can be increased by receiving, to the extent that may be necessary, new expressions of revealed Truth, formulated by the Church. The ensemble of the dogmas, that the Church possesses and transmits, is not a body constituted once and for all, neither has it the incomplete character of a doctrine "in process of becoming". At every moment of its historical existence, the Church formulates the Truth of the faith in its dogmas, which always express a fulness to which one adheres intellectually in the light of the Tradition, whilst never being able to make it definitively explicit. A truth which would allow itself to be made fully explicit would not have the character of living fulness, which belongs to Revelation: "fulness" and "rational explicitness" mutually exclude one another. However, if the mystery revealed by Christ and known in the Holy Spirit cannot be made explicit, it does not remain inexpressible. Since "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" dwells in Christ (Col. ii, 9), this fulness of the Divine Word incarnate will be expressed as well in the Scriptures as in the "abridged word" of the symbols of faith[2] or of other dogmatic definitions. This fulness of the Truth that they express without making

[1] H. Denzinger, Enchiridion Symbolorum, No. 302 (Ed. 26, pp. 146–147): ... *τὴν βασιλικὴν ὥσπερ ἐρχόμενοι τρίβον, επακολουθοῦντες τῇ θεηγόρῳ διδασκαλίᾳ τῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ τῇ παραδόσει τῆς καθολικῆς ἐκκλησίας· τοῦ γὰρ ἐν αυτῇ οἰκήσαντος ἁγίου πνεύματος εἶναι ταύτην γινώσκομεν· ὁρίζομεν συν ἀκριβείᾳ πάσῃ καὶ ἐμμελείᾳ* ... walking, so to speak, on the royal road, following the divinely inspired teaching of our Holy Fathers, as well as the Tradition of the catholic Church (for we know that it belongs to the Holy Spirit which dwells in the Church), we define in all rigour and justice...

[2] See above, page 14, the quotation from Saint John Cassian.

explicit, allows the dogmas of the Church to be akin to the Holy Scriptures. It is for this reason that the Pope Saint Gregory the Great brought together in the same veneration the dogmas of the first four Councils and the four Gospels.[1]

All that we have said on the "dogmatic tradition" can be applied to other expressions of the Christian mystery that the Church produces in the Tradition, conferring on them equally the presence of the "fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i, 23). Just like the "divinely inspired didascalia" of the Church, the iconographic tradition also receives its full meaning and its intimate coherence with other documents of the faith (Scripture, dogmas, liturgy) in the Tradition of the Holy Spirit. Just as much as dogmatic definitions, it has been possible for the icons of Christ to be allied with the Holy Scriptures, to receive the same veneration, since iconography sets forth in colours what the word announces in written letters.[2] Dogmas are addressed to the intelligence, they are intelligible expressions of the reality which surpasses our mode of understanding. Icons impinge on our consciousness by means of the outer senses, presenting to us the same supra-sensible reality in "aesthetic" expressions (in the proper sense of the word, that which can be perceived by the senses). But the intelligible element does not remain foreign to iconography: in looking at an icon one discovers in it a "logical" structure, a dogmatic content which has determined its composition. This does not mean that icons are a kind of hieroglyph or a sacred rebus, translating dogmas into a language of conventional signs. If the intelligibility, which penetrates these sensible images, is identical with that of the dogmas of the Church, it is that the two "traditions"—dogmatic and iconographic—coincide in so far as they express, each by its proper means, the same revealed reality. Although it transcends the intelligence and the senses, the Christian Revelation does not exclude them: on the contrary, it assumes them and transforms them by the light of the Holy Spirit, in the Tradition which is the unique mode of receiving the revealed Truth, of recognising it in its expressions whether scriptural, dogmatic, iconographic or other and also of expressing it anew.

VLADIMIR LOSSKY

[1] Epistolarum lib. I, Ep. XXV: P.L. 77, col. 613.

[2] "We prescribe the veneration of the holy icon of Our Lord Jesus Christ in rendering to it the same honour as to the Books of the Holy Gospels. For just as by the letters of these latter we all come to salvation, so by the action of the colours in images, all—learned as well as ignorant—equally find their profit in what is within reach of all. In effect, just as the word is set forth by letters, painting sets forth and represents the same things by colours. Hence, if someone does not venerate the icon of Christ the Saviour, may he be unable to see His face at the second coming..." (Denzinger, No. 337, pp. 164–165 of ed. 26.)—If we cite here the third canon of the anti-photian Synod (869–870), whose acts have been broken by the Church (not only in the East but also in the West, as shown by F. Dvornik in *The Photian Schism*, London, 1948, pp. 176–177 and passim), it is because it gives a beautiful example of the rapprochement current between the Holy Scriptures and iconography, united in the same Tradition of the Church. Cf. the sequel of the text quoted, on the icons of the Mother of God, of angels and of saints (Denzinger, loc. cit.).

THE MEANING AND LANGUAGE OF ICONS

Icons used for prayer (εἰκών—image, portrait) that date from the first centuries of Christianity have not reached us, but we know of them both from Church Tradition and from historical evidence. As we shall see in studying individual images, Church Tradition traces the first icons back to the lifetime of the Saviour Himself and the period immediately after Him. As is well known, the art of portraiture was at that time flourishing in the Roman Empire. Portraits were made of relatives and of distinguished people. Therefore there are no grounds for supposing that Christians, especially those of pagan origin, were an exception to the general rule, all the more so since even in Judaism, which adhered to the Old Testament prohibition of images, there existed at that time currents of opinion which accepted human images. In the History of the Church by Eusebius we find, for instance, the following phrase: "I have seen a great many portraits of the Saviour, of Peter and of Paul, which have been preserved up to our times."[1] Before this passage Eusebius describes in detail a statue of the Saviour he had seen in the city of Paneas (Caesarea Philippi) in Palestine, erected by the woman with an issue of blood, who was healed by the Saviour (Matt. ix, 20–23; Mark v, 24–34; Luke viii, 43–48).[2]

Eusebius' testimony is all the more valuable since he was personally very antagonistic to icons. Consequently his reference to the portraits he had seen is accompanied by the disapproving comment that it is a pagan custom.[3]

The existence of iconoclastic currents in the first centuries of Christianity is well known and perfectly intelligible. Christian communities were surrounded on all sides by paganism with its idolatry. It was therefore natural that many Christians, both of Jewish and of pagan origin, conscious of the negative experience of paganism, should strive to protect Christianity from the infection of idolatry, which could insinuate itself through artistic creation; basing themselves on the Old Testament prohibition of images, they denied the possibility of their existence in Christianity as well.

However, despite the occurrence of these iconoclastic tendencies, there existed the fundamental line which was gradually and consecutively developed in the Church, though with no kind of external formulation. Expression of this fundamental line is given by the Church Tradition telling us of the existence of an icon of the Saviour during His lifetime and of icons of the Holy Virgin immediately after Him. This tradition testifies that right from the beginning there had been a clear understanding of the significance and possibilities of the image, and that the attitude of the Church towards it never changed, since it is derived from the actual teaching on the Divine Incarnation. This teaching shows that the image is necessarily inherent in the very essence of Christianity, from its inception, since Christianity is the revelation by God-Man not only of the Word of God, but also of the Image of God.

[1] Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia (265–340), *History of the Church*, Book VII, ch. 18.; P.G. 20, col. 680.

[2] The bas-relief on one of the IVth century sarcophagi preserved in the Lateran Museum is supposed to be a reproduction of this statue.

[3] The existence of such an attitude towards art in the first centuries of Christianity gave birth to the assertion that "Christian Art was born outside the Church and, at least in the beginning, developed against its will. Christianity, which stemmed from Judaism, was naturally as averse to any kind of idolatry as was the religion of its origin." This opinion of L. Bréhier (*L'Art Chrétien*, p. 13, Paris 1928) expresses a view that is very wide-spread on the relationship of the ancient Church to art. Yet, leaving aside the identification of icon-worship with idolatry—an identification incomprehensible to the conscience of a believer of the Church—this assertion seems to us as little convincing as the testimonies of ancient writers quoted in its support. For example, the most implacable of them, Clement of Alexandria (ca. 215), protesting against images, obviously has in mind idols, for he indicates at the same time which symbols should be represented on seals, and some of these symbols include human figures (The Pedagogue, I, III, c. XI; P.G. 8, col. 633). And references to the "Fathers of the Church", Tertullian (160–240) and Origen (185–249), are still less convincing, for, despite the respect in which they are held by the Church, not only were they never regarded as Fathers or saints, but much of their teaching was rejected by the Church as not acceptable. Consequently, it seems to us more justifiable to accept the opposite assertion, based, first of all, on the fact of the existence of images in the catacombs, which, as is well known, served as the place of the cult. Hence, these images were known to simple believers as well as to the higher ecclesiastical hierarchy and their distribution points to definite guidance by the Church. As regards the well known 36th rule of the local Council of Elvira (Spain), held about 300, the rule so often quoted, which forbids depicting on church walls that which is the subject of worship and veneration (*placuit picturas in ecclesia esse non debere nec quod colitur et adoratur in parietibus depingatur*), it does not provide sufficient basis for interpretation in an iconoclastic sense. The fathers of this Council are speaking only of images on walls, that is to say of monumental painting forming an integral part of the building, and say nothing of images of other kinds which existed then and are preserved till to-day (e.g. on sarcophagi). One can only conclude that this prohibition is due to practical reasons and not to an attitude towards sacred images based on principle. In this latter case the rule would have been formulated quite differently and would not have forbidden uniquely representations on walls. The Council was held shortly before the persecutions of Diocletian, which could already be foreseen. Therefore this text could equally be interpreted as a desire to protect the sacred images from outrage. (Cf. Hefele, *Histoire des Conciles*, vol. I, part 1, p. 240. Paris, 1907.)

"No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared[1] him" (John i, 18)—has revealed the image—the icon of God. Through His Incarnation, God the Word "being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his (the Father's) person" (Heb. i, 3), reveals to the world, in His Divinity, the image of the Father. When Philip asks: "Lord, shew us the Father", the Lord answers: "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John xiv, 8, 9). As "in the bosom of the Father", so after Incarnation, the Son is consubstantial with the Father, being, according to His Divinity, His image, equal in honour. This truth revealed in Christianity lies at the foundation of its pictorial art. So the image not only does not contradict the essence of Christianity but, being its basic truth, is inalienably connected with it. This is the foundation of the tradition showing that the preaching of Christianity to the world was from the beginning carried out by the Church through word and image. Precisely on this basis the Fathers of the VIIth Oecumenical Council were able to say: "The tradition of making images... existed even at the time of the preaching of Christianity by the Apostles... Iconography is by no means an invention of painters but is, on the contrary, an established law and tradition of the Catholic Church."[2] This fact of the image being from the start inherent in Christianity explains its appearance in the Church and how it silently and imperceptibly occupied its natural place in Church practice as something self-evident, despite the Old Testament prohibition and subsequent opposition. Already in the IVth century a whole series of Church Fathers, such as Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, Gregory of Nyssa, John Chrysostom and others, refer in their works to images as to a normal and generally accepted institution of the Church.[3]

Of the appearance of icons of the first centuries of Christianity we have no knowledge, and lack all data for judgment about it. However, on the basis of the latest investigations, it is possible to form a clear idea of the general trend in the art of that period. In his fundamental work on the history of Byzantine art, V. N. Lazarev, examining all the complex circumstances among which early Christian art originated, and basing himself on a whole series of previous investigations, arrives at the following conclusion: "While associating itself in many things with classical antiquity, especially with its later, more spiritualised forms, it nevertheless evolves for itself a series of individual tasks from the very beginning of its existence. It is by no means a classical antiquity Christianised, as Siebel tried to prove.[4] The new thematic content of early Christian art was not purely external fact. It reflected a new outlook, a new religion, an understanding of reality that was new by origin. Consequently the new content could not be clothed in the old forms of antiquity. It needed a style that would express in the best possible manner the spiritual ideals of Christianity. So all the creative efforts of Christian artists were directed towards the elaboration of this style."[5] Further, the author refers to the work of Dvořák[6] and speaks of the fact that this new style begins to take shape, in its main outlines, even in the paintings of the catacombs.

The themes of the catacomb paintings, beginning with the Ist and IInd centuries, include, besides allegorical and symbolical representations, such as an anchor, fish, lamb and so forth, a whole series of pictures drawn from the Old and New Testaments. These paintings correspond to the sacred texts, biblical, liturgic and patristic.

[1] "Declared"—the Greek word is ἐξηγήσατο, revealed.

[2] Acts of the Council, 6th Session.

[3] Thus, for instance, St. Basil the Great says in his 17th Discourse on the day of the holy martyr Barlaam, "Arise now before me, you iconographers of the saints' merits... Let me be conquered by your pictures of the valiant deeds of the martyr!... Let me look at this fighter most vividly depicted in your image... Let also the Instigator of the fight, Christ, be represented in your picture." (P.G. 31, col. 489 AC.) The well known direction of one of the greatest ascetic writers of antiquity, St. Nilus of Sinai (died 430 or 450) is very characteristic in the same sense. It is addressed to the Prefect Olympiodorus, who had built a church and was intending to embellish it with decorative paintings and scenes of daily life. Nilus writes: "Let the hand of the artist fill the church on both sides with pictures from the Old and the New Testaments, in order that the illiterate, who cannot read the Divine Scriptures, should, by looking at the painted images, bring to mind the valiant deeds of those who served God with all sincerity and be themselves incited to rival the glorious and ever-memorable exploits, through which they exchanged earth for heaven, preferring the invisible to the visible." (St. Nilus, Epist. P. G. 79, col. 577.)

[4] *Christliche Antike*, I–II, Marburg, 1906–1909; *Das Werden christlicher Kunst*, Repert. f. Kunstw., 1916, pp. 113–129; *Frühchristliche Kunst*, Munich, 1920.

[5] V. N. Lazarev, *History of Byzantine Painting*. Moscow, 1947, p. 38. In Russian.

[6] *Katakombenmalereien*; *Die Anfänge der christlichen Kunst* (*Kunstgeschichte als Geistesgeschichte*), Munich, 1924.

The fundamental principle of this art is a pictorial expression of the teaching of the Church, by representing concrete events of sacred History and indicating their inner meaning.[1] This art is intended not to reflect the problems of life but to answer them, and thus, from its very inception, is a vehicle of the Gospel teaching. The main outline of the art of the Church is already beginning to be formed here. Illusory three-dimensional space is replaced by the plane of reality; the connection between figures and objects becomes conventionally symbolical. The image is reduced to a minimum of detail and a maximum of expressiveness. The great majority of figures are represented with their faces turned towards the congregation, for the importance lies not only in the action and interaction of the persons represented, but also in their state, which is usually a state of prayer. The artist lived and thought in images and reduced forms to the limit of a simplicity, the depth of whose inner content is accessible only to the spiritual eye. He cleansed his work of everything personal and remained anonymous; his essential concern was to transmit tradition. He understood, on the one hand, the necessity of being cut off from sensory enjoyment, and on the other, the need to use all visible nature in order to express the world of the spirit; for to transmit the invisible world to sensory vision demands not hazy fog but, on the contrary, peculiar clarity and precision of expression, just as to express apprehensions of the heavenly world the holy Fathers use particularly clear and exact formulations.

The beauty of early Christian art lies in the fact that there was not as yet an unfolding of the fullness contained within it, but only a promise of limitless possibilities.

That this art was connected with sacred texts does not mean that it was divorced from life. Apart from the fact that it speaks in the pictorial language of its time, its link with life lies not in the representation of one or another event or psychological moment of human life and activity, but in the representation of this activity itself, as for instance, representations of different kinds of work and profession, as a sign that work consecrated to God is sanctified. Moreover, as we have already said, the themes themselves of this art do not reflect the problems of life, but answer them. At that time of martyrdoms, the sufferings are not shown, just as they are not described in liturgical texts. What is shown is not the suffering itself, but the bearing there must be towards it, as the reply. This explains the wide popularity in the catacombs of such subjects as Daniel in the lion's den, the martyr Thecla, and so forth.

From the very first centuries, Christian art was deeply symbolical and this symbolism was not exclusively the feature of this period of Christian life. It is essentially inseparable from Church art, because the spiritual reality it represents cannot be transmitted otherwise than through symbols. Yet in the first centuries of Christianity this symbolism is mostly iconographic, i.e. connected with a subject. For instance, to indicate that the woman holding a baby is the Mother of God, next to her is depicted a prophet pointing to a star (Balaam).[2] To indicate that baptism is the entry to a new life, the baptised, even a fully grown man, is represented as a boy or a small child (see p. 165, the description of the icon of Christ's Baptism), and so on. Separate symbols were used not only from the Old and New Testaments (lamb, good shepherd, fish...) but also from pagan mythology, as for instance, Cupid and Psyche, Orpheus, etc. In using these myths, Christianity re-establishes their true and profound meaning, filling them with a new content. This adoption by Christianity of elements of pagan art is not limited only to the first period of its existence. Later, too, it takes from the world around it all that may serve it as a means and form of expression, just as the Fathers of the Church used the instrument of Greek philosophy, adapting its understanding and language to Christian theology. Through the classical traditions of Alexandrine art, which had preserved Greek Hellenism in its purest form[3], Christian art becomes heir to the traditions of the ancient art of Greece. It attracts elements of art from Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, etc., introduces into the Church all its heritage and uses its attainments for the fullness and perfection of its pictorial language, transforming it all to correspond to the requirements of Christian dogmatics.[4] In other words, Christianity selects and adopts from the pagan world all there was of

[1] At times the meaning of individual pictures becomes clear only when taken together with others amongst which they occur. For example, in the series of three pictures, 1) a fisherman taking a fish out of water, 2) baptism and 3) the paralytic carrying his bed, the first image is the symbol of conversion to the Christian faith, then is shown how, through baptism, man is made whole from sins and infirmities. Rome, catacomb of Callixtus.

[2] The Roman catacomb of Priscilla, IInd century.

[3] V. N. Lazarev, op. cit. vol. I, p. 48.

[4] Given such a complex formation of Christian art, to derive the Christian image from the Egyptian sepulchral portrait, as is sometimes done, is an excessive simplification of its genesis, incorrect both historically and dogmatically.

its own, that is, all that was "Christian before Christ"—all that was scattered through it as separate, splintered particles of truth—and links them together, joining them to the fullness of the revelation. "As this bread was scattered among the hills, but, being gathered, has become one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Thy Kingdom;" thus is this idea expressed in the Eucharistic prayer of ancient Christians.[1] This process of gathering is not the influence of the pagan world upon Christianity, but the influx into Christianity of those elements of the pagan world, which by their very nature had to flow into it; it is not a penetration of pagan customs into the Church, but their "churchification", not a "paganisation of Christian art", as is often thought, but the Christianisation of pagan art.

This incorporation with the fullness of the revelation touches all sides of human activity. What is gathered into the Church is all in human nature that is inherent, created by God; and this includes creative art, sanctified by its participation in the building of the Kingdom of God, the task of the Church in the world. Therefore what the Church accepts from the world is determined not by the needs of the Church but by those of the world, for in this participation of the world in building the Kingdom of God (depending, of course, on its free will) lies the principal meaning of its existence. And inversely, the principal meaning of the existence in the world of the Church itself is the work of drawing this world into the fullness of the revelation—its salvation. Therefore, the process of gathering, which began in the first centuries of Christianity, is the normal and consequently unceasing work of the Church in the world. In other words, this process is not limited to certain particular periods of its existence, but is its constant function. As the Church proceeds with its building work it absorbs and to the end will continue to absorb from outside all that is genuine and true, however scanty and incomplete, and it supplements what is lacking.

This process does not depersonalise. The Church does not reject particularities connected with human nature or with time and place (for example national, personal or other features), but sanctifies their content, filling it with new meaning. In their turn, these particularities do not interfere with the unity of the Church, but bring into it new forms of expression, peculiar to them. In this way, it realises that unity in multiplicity and richness in unity, which both in totality and in details expresses the catholic principle of the Church. As applied to the language of art, it means not uniformity or a certain general stereotyped manner, but the expression of a single truth in varied forms of art appropriate to every people, time and individual man, forms which allow us to distinguish between icons of differing nationalities and differing epochs, despite the similarity of their content.

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As we have said earlier, in the conscience of the Church the Divine dispensation is organically connected with the image. Therefore the doctrine relating to the image is not something separate, not an appendix, but follows naturally from the doctrine of salvation, of which it is an inalienable part. In all its fullness, it has been inherent in the Church from the very first, but, like other aspects of its teaching, it becomes affirmed gradually, in response to the needs of the moment, as for instance in the 82nd rule of the Trullan Council, or in reply to heresies and errors, as in the iconoclastic period. It was the same here as with the dogmatic truth of the two natures of Christ. This truth was professed by the first Christians in a more practical manner, by their very life, and did not yet have a sufficiently full theoretical formulation; but later, by force of external necessity, due to the appearance of heresies and false teachings, it was formulated with precision. So too with the icon; the dogmatic basis for its existence was first laid down by the Trullan Council of 691–2, in connection with a change in the symbolism of Church art; in the course of its development the rule mentioned marks a most important stage, for here, for the first time, it is given direction in principle. This 82nd rule of the Trullan Council says: "Certain holy icons have the image of a lamb, at which is pointing the finger of the Forerunner. This lamb is taken as the image of grace, representing the true Lamb, Christ our God, Whom the law foreshowed. Thus accepting with love the ancient images and shadows[2] as prefigurations and symbols of truth transmitted to the Church, we prefer grace and truth, receiving it as the fulfilment of the law. Thus, in order to make plain this fulfilment for all eyes to see, if only by means of pictures, we ordain that from henceforth icons should represent, instead of the lamb

[1] Didache, IX, 4, *Les Pères Apostoliques, Doctrine des Apôtres*, pp. 16–18. Paris, 1926.

[2] Cf. Heb. viii, 5 and x, 1.

of old, the human image of the Lamb, Who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world, Christ our God, so that through this we may perceive the height of the abasement of God the Word and be led to remember His life in the flesh, His Passion and death for our salvation and the ensuing redemption of the world."

First of all, this rule is an answer to the situation which existed at that time, namely, that in Church practice, side by side with historical representations, symbols replacing the human image of God were still used.[1] The significance of the 82nd rule lies, first of all, in the fact that it is based on the connection of the icon with the dogma of the truth of the Divine Incarnation, with the life of Christ in the flesh; this is the commencement of the basing of the icon on Christological dogma, which was later to be widely used and which, in the period of iconoclasm, was to be further developed by apologists of icons. Moreover, the Council discontinues, as belonging to a stage already past, the use of symbolical subjects in place of the human image of Christ. It is true that the Council mentions only one symbolical subject—the lamb. Yet, immediately after this it speaks in general of "ancient images and shadows", evidently seeing in the lamb not merely one of the symbols but the foremost of them; so that uncovering the meaning of this symbol would naturally lead to the uncovering of all other symbolical subjects. It bases its injunction on the fact that Old Testament prefigurations were fulfilled in the New Testament and ordains a transition from the symbols of the Old Testament and of early Christianity to a representation of what they symbolised, to the uncovering of their direct meaning, to that which was manifested in time and so became accessible to sensory perception, representation and description. The image, appearing in the Old Testament symbol, through incarnation becomes reality, which in its turn appears as the image of the future glory of God, the image of "the height of the abasement of God the Word". The subject itself, the image of Jesus Christ, is a testimony of His coming and His life in the flesh, the kenosis of the Deity, His abasement. And the way this abasement is represented, the way it is transmitted in visual representation, reflects the glory of God. In other words, the abasement of God the Word is shown in such a manner that in looking at it we see and contemplate His divine glory in His human image; and we come thus to know that His death means Salvation and Redemption of the world. The latter part of the 82nd rule indicates wherein the symbolism of the icon consists. The symbol is not in the iconography, not in *what* is represented, but in the method of representing, in *how* it is represented. In other words, the teaching of the Church is transmitted not only by the theme, but also by the mode of expression. In this way the definition of the Trullan Council not only lays down the beginning of the formulation of the dogmatic significance of the icon, but at the same time indicates the possibility of making art reflect, by a new symbolism, the glory of God. It emphasises the meaning and importance of historical reality, showing that a realistic image alone can transmit the teaching of the Church, and de-

[1] In connection with the change in the position of the Church, when under St. Constantine it acquired a legal right of existence in the Roman Empire, the character of Church art also changed. At that time a great wave of new converts began to flood the Church, which brought the need for more spacious churches and a corresponding change in the character of preaching. The symbols of the first centuries, which belonged to a small number of initiates, for whom their meaning and content were clear and intelligible, were less intelligible to the new converts. Hence, in order to make a grasp of the teaching of the Church more accessible to them, a more concrete and clear pictorial expression of this teaching became necessary. In this connection there appeared, in the IVth and Vth centuries, great historical cycles of events from the Old and New Testaments, large, monumental paintings. The majority of the principal Church feasts became established at that time, as well as the main outlines of the compositions corresponding to them, which are still preserved to this day in the Orthodox Church. It should be noted that the themes of the Church art of that time frequently have a definite character of dogmatic answers to questions arising in the sphere of faith and reflect the dogmatic struggle of the Church with existing heresies. For instance, in answer to the Arian heresy condemned by the first Oecumenical Council (325), on either side of the image of the Saviour are placed Alpha and Omega (Rev. xxii, 13) indicating that Jesus Christ is consubstantial with God the Father (Louis Bréhier, *L'Art Chrétien*, p. 67, Paris, 1928). After the condemnation of Nestorius by the Ephesian Council in 431 and the solemn proclamation of the truth of the Godbearing of Mary, there appears a triumphal image of the Mother of God, with the Divine Child enthroned in glory. The same subject of struggle against nestorianism gives rise to a whole cycle of pictures in the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome, emphasising the Divinity of the Child Jesus and the significance of the Mother of God. Frescoes in the VIth century churches of St. Sophia and the Holy Apostles in Constantinople also reflected the struggle with the teachings of Nestorius and Eutyches (V. N. Lazarev, op. cit. p. 51). Dogmatic warfare by means of images was waged also in the subsequent centuries. Thus, for example, after the end of the iconoclastic period, the image of the Saviour Emmanuel (see the description of this icon, p. 77) was very widely used as a testimony of the Divine Incarnation. This image was used in the struggle against the heresy of the Judaisers in Russia in the XVth century. Against the same heresy there appeared, in the iconography of the XVth and XVIth centuries, a whole series of new subjects, demonstrating the connection between the Old Testament and the New as its successor.

fines all the rest ("images and shadows") as not expressing the fullness of grace, although worthy of reverence and capable of satisfying the needs of a certain epoch. This statement does not quite abolish the iconographic symbol, but makes it auxiliary, of secondary importance. Essentially this rule lays down the foundation of the iconographic Canon, that is, a certain criterion for judging whether an image is liturgical, just as in the domain of words and music the Canon determines whether a text or a hymn is liturgical. It establishes the principle of correspondence of the icon with the Holy Scriptures and defines in what this correspondence consists: the historical reality and the kind of symbolism which truly reflects the coming Kingdom of God.

Thus the Church gradually creates an art new both in form and content, which uses images and forms drawn from the material world to transmit the revelation of the Divine world, making this world accessible to understanding and contemplation. This art develops side by side with the Divine services and, like the latter, expresses the teaching of the Church in conformity with the word of the Scriptures. This conformity between word and image was particularly clearly expressed by the ordinance of the VIIth Oecumenical Council, which re-established the veneration of icons. Through the voice of the fathers of this Council the Church rejected the compromise proposal to place their veneration of icons on a level with that of sacred vessels, and ordained that it be on a level with the Cross and the Gospels:—with the Cross as the distinctive symbol of Christianity, with the Gospels, as representing a complete correspondence between verbal image and visible image.[1] The formulation of the Holy Council says: "We preserve, without innovations, all the Church traditions established for us, whether written or not written, one of which is icon-painting as corresponding to what the Gospels preach and relate... For if the one is shown by the other, the one is incontestably made clear by the other." This formulation shows that the Church sees in the icon not a simple art, serving to illustrate the Holy Scriptures, but a complete correspondence of the one to the other, and therefore attributes to the icon the same dogmatic, liturgic and educational significance as it does to the Holy Scriptures. As the word of the Holy Scriptures is an image, so the image is also a word. "What the word transmits through the ear, that painting silently shows through the image, says St. Basil the Great"[2], and "by these two means, mutually accompanying one another ... we receive knowledge of one and the same thing."[3] In other words, the icon contains and professes the same truth as the Gospels and therefore, like the Gospels, is based on exact concrete data, and in no way on invention, for otherwise it could not explain the Gospels nor correspond to them.

Thus the icon is placed on a level with the Holy Scriptures and with the Cross, as one of the forms of revelation and knowledge of God, in which Divine and human will and action become blended. Apart from its direct meaning, each alike is a reflection of the higher world; each alike is a symbol of the Spirit contained in them. Consequently, the meaning both of the word and of the image, their role and significance are the same. The image, like the Divine service, transmits the teaching of the Church and expresses the grace-given life of the sacred Tradition in the Church. Through the Divine service and through the icon, revelation becomes for believers their property and precept for life. For this reason Church art acquires from the very beginning a form in keeping with what it expresses. The Church evolves an entirely special category of image, in accordance with its nature, and this special character is conditioned by the purpose it serves. The Church is a "kingdom not of this world" (John xviii, 36) existing in the world and for the world, for its salvation. Its nature is peculiarly its own, distinct from the world, and it serves the world precisely by being thus different from it. Consequently the manifestations of the Church, through which it fulfills this service, be they word, image, singing or some other, differ from analogous manifestations of the world. They all bear the seal of their transcendental nature, which externally distinguishes them from the world.

Architecture, painting, music, poetry cease to be forms of art, each following its own way, independently of the others, in search of appropriate effects, and become parts of a single liturgic whole which by no means diminishes their significance, but implies in each case renunciation of an individual role, of self-assertion. From forms

[1] This is why it is impossible to understand the image of a feast or a saint, to discover the meaning and significance of its details, unless one knows the corresponding Divine service, and, in the case of a saint, also his life. The existing analyses and explanations of icons go wrong as a rule precisely because acquaintance with these is merely superficial, and sometimes totally lacking.

[2] Discourse 19, On the 40 Martyrs. P.G. 31, col. 509A.

[3] Acts of the VIIth Oecumenical Council, Act 6.

of art with separate aims, they all become transformed into varied means for expressing, each in its own domain, one and the same thing—the essence of the Church. In other words, they become various instruments of the knowledge of God. It follows that from its very nature Church art is a liturgic art. Its liturgic character is not due to the fact that the image serves as a framework and addition to the Divine service, but to their complete mutual correspondence. The mystery enacted and the mystery depicted are one, both inwardly in their meaning and outwardly in the symbolism which expresses this meaning. This is why the image of the Orthodox Church, the icon, does not define itself as an art belonging to one or another historical epoch, nor as the expression of the national peculiarities of one or another people, but only by its function which is as universal as Orthodoxy itself, being determined by the very essence of the image and its role in the Church. Since in its essence the icon, like the word, is a liturgic art, it never served religion but, like the word, has always been and is an integral part of religion, one of the instruments for the knowledge of God, one of the means of communion with Him. This explains the importance which the Church attributes to the image—an importance such that of all victories over a multitude of various heresies, it was only the victory over iconoclasm and the re-establishment of the veneration of icons that was proclaimed as the Triumph of Orthodoxy, celebrated on the first Sunday of Lent.

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The fullest teaching on the icon was given by the VIIth Oecumenical Council (787) and by those holy Fathers who were apologists of the icon during the iconoclastic period. In concise form it is contained in the Kontakion of the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, established, as we have seen, to commemorate victory over iconoclasm. The text of this Kontakion is as follows:

> "The indefinable word of the Father made Himself definable, having taken flesh of Thee, O Mother of God, and having refashioned the soiled image to its former estate, has suffused it with Divine beauty. But confessing salvation we show it forth in deed and word."

The 82nd rule of the Trullan Council gives directions as to how to express most fully and precisely the teaching of the Church in an image; in contrast to this, the Kontakion gives a dogmatic explanation of the canonical image, that is, an image which already corresponds to its purpose and answers the requirements of liturgic art. This brief but wonderfully full and exact formulation of the teaching on the icon thus of necessity also contains the whole teaching on salvation. It is reverently preserved by the Orthodox Church and lies at the foundation of Orthodox understanding of the icon and attitude towards it.

The first part of the Kontakion discloses the connection between the icon and Christological dogma, the basing of the icon on the Divine Incarnation. The subsequent part discloses the meaning of the Divine Incarnation, the fulfilment of God's design concerning man, and consequently concerning the world. Essentially, both these parts of the Kontakion are a reiteration of the patristic formula: "God became man in order that man should become god." The last part of the Kontakion gives man's answer to God, our profession of the saving truth of the Divine Incarnation, the acceptance by man of the Divine dispensation and his participation therein. By the last words of the Kontakion the Church shows in what our participation is expressed, and in what consists the fulfilment of our salvation.

The characteristic feature of the Kontakion is that it is addressed not to one of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, but to the Mother of God. Thus it represents a liturgic, prayerful expression of the dogmatic teaching about the Divine Incarnation. It is evident that just as the negation of the human image of the Saviour implies the negation of the Divine Motherhood[1], so the affirmation of this icon exacts first of all the manifestation of the role of the Mother of God, veneration of Her as the indispensable condition of the Incarnation, the cause of the fact that God became representable. According to the teaching of the Fathers, it is precisely on the fact that the God-Man, Jesus Christ, had a representable Mother that this image is based. "In so far as He proceeded from a Father Who could not be represented," says St. Theodore the Studite[2], "Christ, not being representable, cannot have an image made by art. In fact, what image could correspond to the Divinity, the representation of which is

[1] This was the case with the extreme wing of the iconoclasts of the VIIIth and IXth centuries. In fact, though a large number of iconoclasts tolerated images in the Church and protested only against their veneration, the extreme wing, on the contrary, denied the veneration of anything material and thus arrived logically at the negation of all earthly sanctity, of veneration of the Virgin and the saints.

[2] Refutation 3, ch. 2, sec. 3. P.G. 99, col. 417C. See *On the Holy Icons*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1981.

absolutely forbidden in divinely-inspired Scripture? But from the moment when Christ was born of a representable Mother, he clearly has a representation which corresponds with the image of His Mother. And if He had no image made by art, that would mean that He was not born of a representable Mother, that He was born only of the Father; but this contradicts His whole economy." Thus, once the Son of God became Man, it was necessary to represent Him as man.[1] This thought is the main theme of all the fathers who defended the veneration of icons. The fact that the Son of God is representable according to His flesh assumed of the Virgin is contrasted by St. John Damascene and the Fathers of the VIIth Oecumenical Council with the fact that God the Father, being inconceivable and invisible, is thereby incapable of being represented. "Why do we not describe the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ? Because we have not seen Him... But if we saw and knew Him as we did His Son, we should try to describe and depict also Him (the Father)..."[2] say the Fathers of that Council. The same question of depicting God the Father arose in 1667, at the Great Council of Moscow, in connection with the Western composition at that time popular in Russia, depicting the Holy Trinity with God the Father represented as an old man. Basing itself on the holy Fathers, and in particular on the great confessor of faith and apologist of the veneration of icons, St. John of Damascus, the Council points to the impossibility of describing God the Father and forbids His representation in icons.

In depicting the Saviour, we do not depict either His Divine or His human nature, but His Person in which both these natures are incomprehensibly combined. We depict His Person, since the icon can only be a personal, hypostatical image, while nature, "essence has no independent existence, but is seen in persons".[3] The icon is connected with the original, not on the strength of an identity between its own nature and his nature, but because it depicts his person and bears his name, which connects the icon with the person it represents and gives the possibility of communion with him and the possibility of knowing him. Owing to this connection "homage paid to the image is transmitted to the original" say the holy Fathers and the Oecumenical Council, quoting the words of Basil the Great. Inasmuch as the icon is an image, it cannot be consubstantial with the original; otherwise it would cease to be an image and would become the original, would be of one nature with it. The icon differs from the original precisely by the fact that it has another, different nature[4], for "the representation is one thing, and that which it represents is another."[5] In other words, although the two objects are essentially different, there exists between them a known connection, a certain participation of the one in the other. For the Orthodox outlook, the possibility of being at the same time identical and different is quite evident—hypostatically different, yet in nature identical (the Holy Trinity), and hypostatically identical, yet in nature different (the holy icons).[6] This is what St.Theodore the Studite has in view when he says, "As there (in the Trinity) Christ differs from the Father in hypostasy, so here He differs from His own image in nature."[7] And at the same time "the image of Christ is Christ, and the image of a saint is that saint. The power is not split asunder, the glory is not divided, but the glory becomes the attribute of him who is depicted."[8]

[1] On this subject, see also the explanation of the first part of the Kontakion of the Triumph of Orthodoxy in the commentary on the icon of Christ, p. 72.

[2] Acts of the VIIth Oecumenical Council, Act 4.

[3] St.John of Damascus. On the Orthodox Faith, Book III, ch. 6. P.G. 94, col. 1004A.

[4] This point constituted the fundamental difference between the Orthodox and the iconoclast. The iconoclasts regarded the image as consubstantial with the original having one and the same nature with it. Starting from this premise, they came to the logical conclusion that the only possible icon of Christ is the Eucharist. "Christ deliberately chose, as an image of His Incarnation, bread, which bears no likeness to man, in order to prevent idolatry" (exposition of the iconoclastic doctrine at the VIIth Oecumenical Council). "But nothing was more alien to the Orthodox worshippers of icons than to identify the icon with the person it represented. The holy Patriarch Nicephorus... having indicated the difference between the icon and its original, says, 'Those who do not understand this difference are justly called idolators.'" (G. Ostrogorsky, *Gnoseological grounds of the dispute regarding the holy icons*, Seminarium Kondakovianum, vol. 2, p. 50. Prague, 1928. Russian.) The entire argument of the iconoclasts is in this way derived from one fundamental premise—a wrong understanding of what the image is. This is why the Orthodox and the iconoclasts could come to no mutual agreement; they spoke different languages and all the arguments of the iconoclasts missed the mark.

[5] St. John of Damascus, 3rd Discourse in Defence of the Holy Icons, par. 16. P.G. 94, col. 1337 AB. See also *On the Divine Images*. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980.

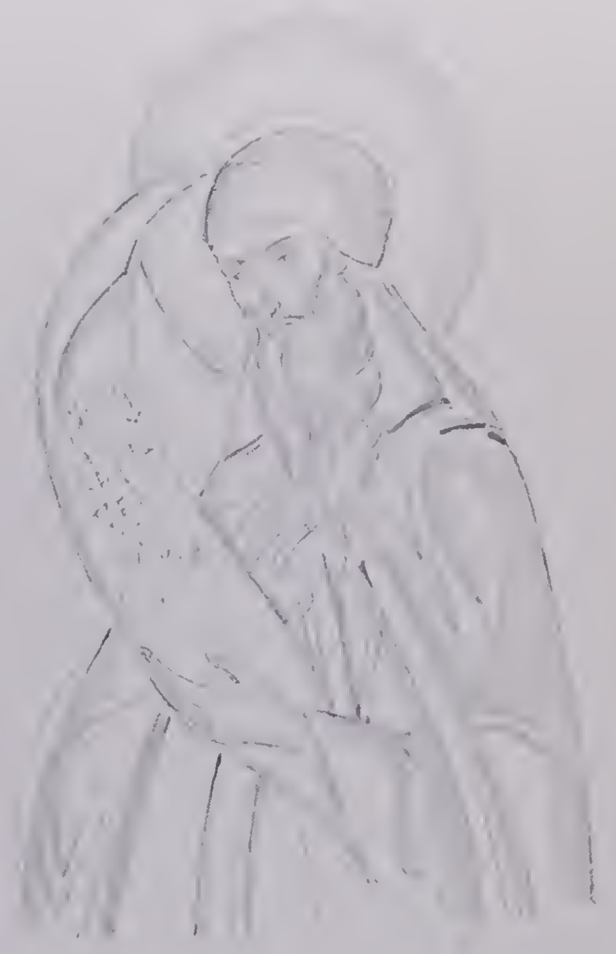
[6] G. Ostrogorsky, op. cit. p. 49.

[7] St. Theodore the Studite, Refutation 3, ch. 3, par. 7. P.G. 99, col. 424.

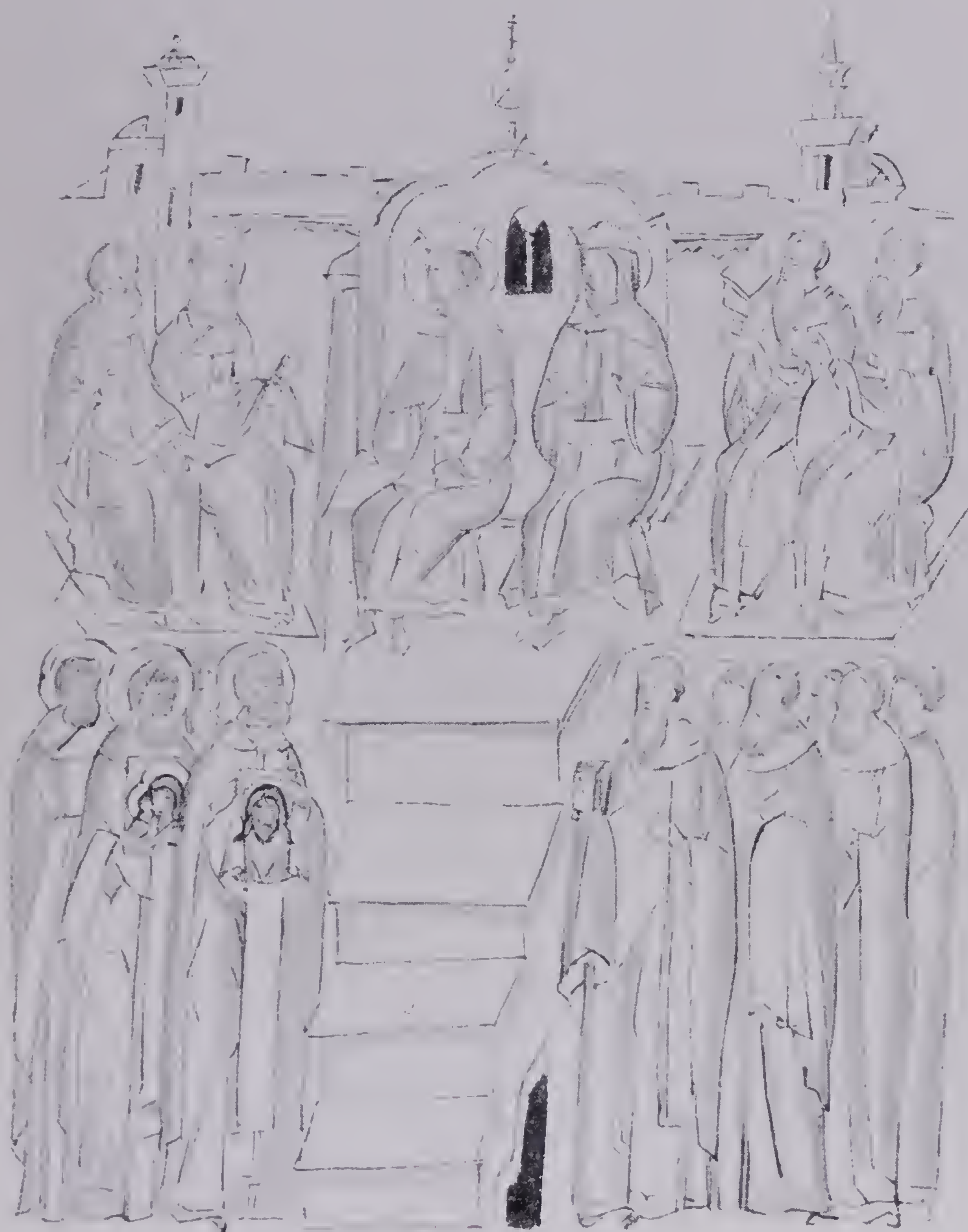
[8] St. John of Damascus. Commentary on St. Basil the Great, appended to 1st Discourse in Defence of Holy Icons. P.G. 94, col. 1256A.



St. Theodore the Studite. Design for an icon.



St. John of Damascus. Design for an icon.



The VIIth Oecumencial Council of Nicaea. Design for an icon.

Thus God the Word, the Second Hypostasis of the Holy Trinity, describable neither by word nor by image, assumes the nature of man, is born of the Virgin Mother of God, while remaining perfect God, becomes perfect Man; becomes visible, tangible and therefore describable. In this wise, the very fact of the existence of the icon is based on the Divine Incarnation. And the immutability of the Divine Incarnation is affirmed and demonstrated by the icon. So in the eyes of the Church the denial of the icon of Christ appears as a denial of the truth and immutability of the fact of His becoming man and therefore of the whole Divine dispensation. Defending the icon in the period of iconoclasm, the Church was not defending merely its educational role, and, still less, its aesthetic value; it was fighting for the very foundations of the Christian faith, the visible testimony of God become man, as the basis of our salvation. "I have seen the human image of God, and my soul is saved" says St. John of Damascus.[1] Such an understanding of the icon explains the steadfastness and intransigence with which its defenders faced torture and death in the period of iconoclasm.

If the first part of the Kontakion of the Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy formulates the dogmatic basis of the icon, its second part, as we have said, by revealing the essence of the Divine dispensation—the fulfilment of God's design concerning man—at the same time reveals also the meaning and significance of the icon.

The Divine Person of Jesus Christ, Who possessed all the fullness of Divine life, and Who at the same time became perfect Man (i.e. man in all things but sin), not only re-establishes in its original purity the image of God defiled by man in his fall ("having refashioned the soiled image to its former estate")[2], but also conjoins the human nature assumed by Him with the Divine life—"suffused it with Divine beauty". The Fathers of the VIIth Occumenical Council say, "He (God) recreated him (man) into immortality by giving him this inalienable gift. This recreation was more in God's likeness and better than the first creation—this gift is eternal"[3], the gift of communion with the Divine beauty and glory. Christ, the new Adam, the beginning of the new creature—the heavenly man bearing the Holy Spirit within him—brings man to that aim for which the first Adam was created and from which he turned away through his fall; He brings him to the fulfilment of the design of the Holy Trinity concerning him: "Let us make man according to our image and likeness" (Gen. i, 26). According to this design, man should be not only an image of God, his Creator, but should also bear His likeness. Yet in the description of the accomplished act of creation "And God made man, according to the image of God he made him" (Gen. i, 27), nothing is said about likeness. It is given to man as a task, to be fulfilled by the action of the grace of the Holy Spirit, with the free participation of man himself. Freely and consciously, "since the expression 'according to the image' indicates capacity of mind and freedom", man enters into the design of the Holy Trinity concerning him and creates his likeness to God, insofar as is possible for him, "for the expression 'according to likeness' means likeness to God in virtues (perfections)"[4], in this way participating in the work of Divine creation.

Thus, if the Divine Hypostasis of the Son of God became Man, our case is the reverse: man can become god, not by nature, but by grace. God descends in becoming Man; man ascends in becoming god. Assuming the likeness of Christ, he becomes "the temple of the Holy Ghost" which is in him (1 Cor. vi, 19), re-establishes his likeness to God.[5] Human nature remains

[1] 1st Discourse in Defence of the Holy Icons, ch. 22. P.G. 94, col. 1256A..

[2] This "soiled image" is the cause of its prohibition in the Old Testament. The loss of the likeness of God in the Fall distorted the image of God in man and the representation of this distorted image inevitably led to idolatry. In strict consequence, the cult images of the Old Testament could only be such symbols as the rod, the golden pot (Heb. ix,4), etc., i.e. the icon of the icon, for they alone could be images of the future fulfilment of the promise in the New Testament. The only exception were the images of cherubims, made according to God's command (Ex. xxv, 18-22) as of beings already established in their service of God. Moreover, their images were allowed only in a place and position which emphasised their subordination to God (guardianship of the ark of testimony). Essentially, this exception annulled the prohibition, since it gave it a conditional pedagogical meaning. It admitted in principle the possibility of the cult image on the one hand and of representing the spiritual world by means of art on the other.

[3] Acts, ibid. Act 6.

[4] St. John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Book II. c. 12, On Man. P.G. 94, col. 920B.

[5] This is the origin of the Church Slavonic term *prepodobny* (literally "very like"), used with reference to the monastic type of sanctity. This word, created in the time of St. Cyril and St. Methodius to translate the Greek word ὅσιος, indicates that a man has acquired the lost likeness to God. It has no corresponding word in other languages. On the other hand, the reverse terms *nepodobny* (unlike), *nepodobniye* (unlikeness) can be traced back to very ancient times. Plato uses them in the philosophical sense (ἀνομοιότητος πόντον or τόπον) in the dialogue, *The Statesman*, to express the dissimilarity between the world and its idea. St. Athanasius the Great uses it already in the Christian

what it is—the nature of a creature; but his person, his hypostasis, by acquiring the grace of the Holy Spirit, by this very fact associates itself with Divine life, thus changing the very being of its creaturely nature. The grace of the Holy Spirit penetrates into his nature, combines with it, fills and transfigures it. Man grows, as it were, into the eternal life, already here on earth acquiring the beginning of this life, the beginning of deification, which will be made fully manifest in the life to come.

The revelation of this future transfigured corporality is shown to us in the Transfiguration of our Lord on Mount Tabor. "And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light" (Matt. xvii, 2). In other words the whole body of the Lord was transfigured, becoming as it were a radiant raiment of the Deity. "As regards the character of the Transfiguration", say the Fathers of the VIIth Oecumenical Council, referring to St. Athanasius the Great, "it was not that the Word laid aside His human form, but rather that the latter was illumined by His glory."[1] Thus in the Transfiguration "on Mount Tabor not only does the Deity appear to men, but manhood appears in Divine glory."[2] A man who has acquired the grace of the Holy Spirit becomes a participant of this Divine glory, this "uncreated and Divine radiance", as St. Gregory Palamas[3] called the light of Mount Tabor. In other words, uniting with the Deity, he becomes illumined by His uncreated light, thus assuming the likeness of the radiant body of Christ. St. Simeon the New Theologian describes his personal experience of this inner illumination in the following words, amongst others: "Having become all fire in his soul, he (man) transmits the inner radiance gained by him also to the body, just as physical fire transmits its effect to iron."[4] However, as iron is not transformed into fire but remains iron, merely becoming purified, so here the entire human nature becomes transfigured but nothing in it is destroyed or taken away. On the contrary, being purified of extraneous, foreign and sinful elements, it becomes spiritualised and illumined. So it can be said that a saint is more truly a man than is a sinner, since, by reassuming likeness to God, he achieves the original purpose of his being, is clothed in the incorruptible Beauty of the Kingdom of God, in the creation of which he participates with his life. Therefore, beauty itself as the Orthodox Church understands it, is not a beauty belonging to the creature, but an attribute of the Kingdom of God where God is all in all . . . St. Dionysius the Areopagite calls God Beauty "owing to the splendour He sheds on every being, to each in its proper measure", and also because he sees in Him "the cause of the harmony and the brilliant raiments of every creature, for He illumines all things, like light, by pouring out beauty from that radiant source, which wells up from Himself."[5] Thus every creature shares in Divine Beauty in its proper measure, and bears as it were the seal of its Creator. Yet, this seal is not God's likeness but merely a beauty belonging to the creature. It is a means, and not the end; a way where "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead . . ." (Rom. i, 20). The beauty of the visible world lies not in the transitory splendour of its present state, but in the very meaning of its existence, in its coming transfiguration laid down in it as a possibility to be realised by man. In other words, beauty is holiness, and its radiance the participation of the creature in Divine Beauty.

On the plane of human creative work, beauty is the crowning given by God, the seal of the conformity of the image to its prototype, of the symbol to what it represents, that is, to the Kingdom of the Spirit. The beauty of an icon is the beauty of the acquired likeness to God and so its value lies not in its being beautiful in itself, in its appearance as a beautiful object, but in the fact that it depicts Beauty.

As regards the relationship of the representation, the icon, with what it represents, the Fathers of the VIIth Oecumenical Council say the following, clearly in answer to the accusation of nestorianism made by the iconoclasts against the Orthodox. "Although the Ca-

sense: "He, Who has created the world, seeing it agitated by tempests and in danger of being engulfed in the 'place of unlikeness', took the helm of the soul and came to its aid, setting right all its transgressions." St. Augustine says in his *Confessions* (VII, 10, no. 16): "I saw myself far from Thee, in the region of dissimilitude" (Et inveni me longe esse a Te in regione dissimilitudinis).

[1] Acts, act 6.

[2] *Works of Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna*, Discourse 12. Moscow, 1873, p. 99, Russian.

[3] P.G. 150, 1225A, ch. 149. Quoted from Father Basil Krivoshein, *The Ascetic and Theological Teaching of St. Gregory Palamas*, Seminarium Kondakovianum, 8, Prague, 1936, and Eastern Churches Quarterly, Oct. 1938, p. 201.

[4] Discourses of St. Simeon the New Theologian, Discourse 83, sec. 3, page 385, Moscow, 1892. In Russian.

[5] St. Dionysius the Areopagite, *The Divine Names*, ch. 4, sec. 7. P.G. 3, col. 701C.

tholic Church depicts Christ in His human aspect, it does not separate His flesh from the Divinity conjoined with it. On the contrary, it believes that the flesh is deified and professes it to be one with the Divinity, in accordance with the teaching of the great Gregory the Theologian and with truth. Yet it does not thereby make the flesh of our Lord not deified. Just as a painter who makes a portrait of a man does not, thereby, render him inanimate, but on the contrary the man remains animate and the painting is called his portrait because of its likeness to him, so also we, in making an icon, confess the body of the Lord to be deified and regard the icon as nothing else than an icon, representing a likeness of the prototype. For this reason the icon receives the name of the Lord. Through this alone is it in communion with Him; and for this reason it is worthy of homage and is holy."[1] As these words show, the icon is a likeness not of an animate but of a deified prototype, that is, is an image (conventional, of course) not of corruptible flesh, but of flesh transfigured, radiant with Divine light. It is Beauty and Glory, represented by material means and visible in the icon to physical eyes. Consequently everything which reminds of the corruptible human flesh is contrary to the very nature of the icon, for "flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. xv, 50), and a temporal portrait of a saint cannot be an icon, precisely because it reflects not his transfigured but his ordinary, carnal state. It is indeed this peculiarity of the icon that sets it apart from all forms of pictorial art.

So, depicting the Hypostasis of the incarnate God the Word, the icon testifies to the immutability and fullness of His Incarnation. On the other hand, by this icon we confess that the "Son of Man" depicted in it is truly God—revealed Truth. Man's striving towards God, the subjective, personal side of faith meets here with God's answer to man, with revelation—the objective experienced knowledge, which man expresses in word or in image. For this reason, liturgic art is not only our offering to God, but also God's descent into our midst, one of the forms in which is accomplished the meeting of God with man, of grace with nature, eternity with time. Forms which record this mutual interpenetration of the Divine and the human are handed down by Tradition and, being continually renewed, live eternally in the body of Christ, the Church. Since, like Jesus Christ, God and Man, the Church is an organism both human and Divine, it combines in itself, indivisibly, yet without confusion, two realities: the historical, earthly reality and the reality of the grace of the Holy Spirit which sanctifies all things. The meaning of Church art, and in particular of the icon, lies precisely in that it transmits, or rather testifies visually to these two realities, the reality of God and of the world, of grace and of nature. It is realistic in two senses. Just like the Holy Scriptures, the icon transmits historical fact, an event from Sacred History or an historical personage, depicted in his real physical form and, again like the Holy Scriptures, it indicates the revelation that is outside time, contained in a given historical reality. Thus, through the icon, as through the Holy Scriptures, we not only learn about God, but we also know God.

If transfiguration is an illumination of the entire man, the enlightenment through prayer of his spiritual and material constitution by the uncreated light of Divine Grace, the manifestation of man as a living icon of God, then the icon is an external expression of this transfiguration, the representation of a man filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit. *Thus the icon is not a representation of the Deity, but an indication of the participation of a given person in Divine life.* It is a testimony of the concrete, practical knowledge of the sanctification of the human body.[2]

Through the Incarnation of the Son of God, man receives the possibility not only to restore his likeness to God with the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit, that is, to make an icon of himself by inner doing, but also to reveal his grace-given state to others in word-images and visual images. In other words he can create an external icon out of the matter surrounding him, which has been sanctified by the descent of God upon earth—"we show it forth by deed and word." Thus holiness is the realisation of possibilities given to man by the Divine Incarnation, an example to us; the icon is the means of revealing this realisation, a pictorial exposition of this example. In other words, the icon transmits visually the realisation of the patristic formula we have mentioned earlier: "God became Man so that man

[1] Acts, act 6.

[2] Therefore to ascribe to the icon, as is often done, monophysitism or a leaning towards monophysitism is completely to misunderstand its essence. What is usually taken for monophysitism is the presence in the icon of an indication of the second reality we have mentioned, which distinguishes it from other forms of art. However, on the same grounds, monophysitism could also be ascribed to the Holy Scriptures, for no less than the icon, they too contain an indication of that same reality, and for the same reason and in the same sense differ from all other literature.

should become god." The outcome of this is the organic link, which exists in the Orthodox Church, between the veneration of icons and the worship of saints. It also explains the care with which every external feature of a saint is preserved. Thanks to this the iconography of saints is distinguished by extraordinary stability. This is due not only to the desire to preserve the image sanctified by Tradition, but also to the need to preserve a living and direct connection with the person represented in the icon. Therefore, the icon perforce shows the nature of the service of a saint, whether he be an Apostle, a bishop, a martyr... and reproduces with particular care his characteristic, distinctive traits. This iconographic realism lies at the basis of the icon and is thus one of its most important elements.[1] Moreover, the personal, the individual is often indicated merely by subtle lines and shades, especially when the persons depicted have external features in common. This is why when many icons are grouped together, they produce on someone strange to them an impression of uniformity, even of a certain stereotyped monotony. Exactly the same impression is produced by a superficial reading of the lives of saints. Both in icons and in the lives of saints, the first thing that emerges is not the individuality but its subordination to that of which it is the bearer.

However, defect of resemblance does not cause a lack of connection with the prototype or a lack of veneration towards him. St. Theodore the Studite says: "Even if we do not recognise that the icon represents an image identical with its prototype owing to lack of skill, yet our words will not be inept. For veneration is not shown to an icon inasmuch it falls short of resembling the prototype, but inasmuch it represents a likeness to it."[2] Thus resemblance may be confined to reproducing faithfully the characteristics of the prototype and, without expressing his individuality, to being satisfied with the likeness, as for instance in the drawings offered in this book. However, faithfulness to the prototype is usually such that an Orthodox churchgoer has no difficulty in recognising the saints revered in the icons, to say nothing of the icons of the Saviour and the Mother of God. Even if some saint is not familiar to him, he can always say to what order of sainthood he belongs: whether he is a monk, a martyr, a bishop, etc. Reverently preserving the memory of saints and their characteristics, the Orthodox Church has never accepted the painting of their icons from the imagination of the artist, or from a living model, for this would involve a complete and conscious rupture with the prototype, and the prototype with whose name the icon is inscribed would be arbitrarily replaced by another person. In order to avoid invention, and a rupture between the image and the prototype, iconographers paint from ancient icons and make use of aids. To ancient iconographers the faces of the saints were as familiar as those of their close friends. They painted them either from memory or in other cases used sketches, drawings, etc.[3] When the living Tradition began to be lost towards the end of the XVIth century, these aids were systematised and so-called personal and interpretative manuals (*Podlinniks*) appeared. The first give a schematic iconography of the saints and the feast days (see the schemes reproduced here), with an indication of the basic colours; the second give the same indications of the basic colours and a brief description of the characteristic features of the saints. From that time till now these manuals serve as necessary technical aids to iconographers. They should in no event be confused with the iconographic Canon or with the sacred Tradition, as is sometimes done.

We find the same constancy in the iconography of the festivals, and for the same reason. The very great majority of these images dates from the first centuries of Christianity and originated in the actual localities where the events took place. Almost all these images, like the festivals themselves, originated in Syria and Palestine. They were accepted by the Church as historically the most exact[4], and are still carefully preserved by the Orthodox Church. Here, too, striving above all to avoid any kind

[1] To regard an icon as a personification of some idea, virtue, etc. as is often the case (for instance, to take the Holy Martyr Paraskeva as personifying the death of the Saviour, and the Holy Martyr Anastasia as personifying His Resurrection, and so on) shows a very theoretical approach to the question, deprived of all factual foundation. It is true that allegories are sometimes admitted in icons, as for instance the personification of the river Jordan, of the wilderness, the sun, the moon, and so on, but this is never so with icons of the saints.

[2] 2nd Refut., c. 3, sec. 5.; P. G. 99, col. 421.

[3] "According to the custom established in the Orthodox Church... long before a saint was canonised and his remains disinterred, icons of saints who had commanded most respect among people while still alive were made and were already distributed in the time of the generations nearest to him. General, distinctive information about the saint was preserved, as well as sketches, drawings and verbal notes." (N. P. Kondakov, *The Russian Icon*, Part I, p. 19. In Russian.) Cases are also known in Russia when icons were already made, though not distributed, during the saint's lifetime, if not directly from nature, at least from memory.

[4] "Christian art", says N. P. Kondakov, "generally built its compositions on a realistic basis, reproducing, be it only in the setting and details, the actual conditions in which Christian events took place." (Op. cit. p. 22.)

of invention, the icon adheres strictly to the Holy Scriptures and Holy Tradition, transmitting the facts as laconically as do the Gospels and representing only what a particular text or tradition relates and what is indispensable to transmit the extra—temporal revelation manifested in a given concrete event. Just as in the Holy Scriptures, only those details are admitted which are necessary and sufficient for this purpose. In some images of festivals several moments, differing as to time and place of action, are joined together into one composition (for instance, in the Nativity of Christ, the Birth of the Mother of God, the Spice—bearers at the Sepulchre, etc.). Thus, like the Divine Service, the icon transmits the meaning of the festival as fully as it can be transmitted.

The second reality, the presence of the all-sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, holiness, cannot be depicted by any human means, since it is invisible to external physical sight. Meeting saints in life we pass them by without noticing their holiness, for holiness has no external characteristics. "The world does not see the saints just as the blind do not see the light", says the Metropolitan Philaret.[1] But while remaining invisible to the unillumined eye, holiness is evident to the eye of the spirit. Recognising a man as a saint and glorifying him the Church indicates his holiness by visible means in icons, using a symbolical language it has established, such as haloes, and particular forms, colours and lines. This symbolism indicates what cannot be conveyed directly. But, by this means, revelation coming from the world on high, being expressed in matter, becomes manifest for every man and accessible to his understanding and contemplation. This symbolism reveals what a man has attained by his striving and how he has attained it. Consequently the iconographic Canon, mentioned earlier, determines not only the subject of an icon, *what* is depicted, but also *how* it should be depicted, by what means it is possible to indicate the presence of the grace of the Holy Spirit in a man and to convey his state to others.

We have said earlier that an icon is an external expression of the transfigured state of man, of his sanctification by uncreated Divine light. Both in the writings of the holy Fathers and in the lives of Orthodox saints, we often meet with this manifestation of light, a kind of inner sunlike radiancy coming from the faces of saints at moments of high spiritual exaltation and glorification. This manifestation of light is shown in the icon by the halo, which is thus an exact pictorial representation of an actual manifestation of the spiritual world. But the spiritual state itself, the inner perfection of a man, of which this light is an external manifestation, can be transmitted neither by word nor by image. As a rule when the fathers and ascetic writers come to the description of the actual moment of sanctification they characterise it as a silence, since it is totally indescribable and inexpressible. However, the effect of this state on human nature and in particular on the body can in some measure be described and depicted. Thus, as we have seen, St. Simeon the New Theologian has recourse to the images of fire and iron. A Russian Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, who lived in the XIXth century, gives a more concrete description of it: "When prayer is sanctified by Divine grace...", he says, "the whole soul is drawn towards God by some incomprehensible power, sweeping the body with it... In a man... not only the soul, not only the heart, but also the flesh becomes filled with spiritual comfort and bliss—joy in the living God..."[2] In other words when a man reaches a state in which his usual dispersed condition, "thoughts and feelings coming from the fallen nature"[3] is, with the help of the Holy Spirit, replaced by a state of concentrated prayer, the whole being of a man becomes one in a total soaring to God. "All that was disorder in him", says St. Dionysius the Areopagite, "becomes order; what was without form acquires form, and his life... becomes fully illumined by light."[4] Corresponding with this state of the saint, his whole image in the icon, his face and other details, all lose the sensory aspect of corruptible flesh and become spiritualised. Transmitted in the icon, this transformed state of the human body is the visible expression of the dogma of transfiguration and has thus a great educational significance.[5] An excessively thin nose, small mouth and large eyes—all these are a conventional method of transmitting the state of a saint whose senses have been "refined" as they used to call it in the old times. The organs of sense as well as other details, such as wrinkles, hair, etc., all are subjected to the general harmony of the image and, together with the whole body of the saint, united in one general sweeping towards God. All is brought to a supreme order; in the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit there is no disorder, "for

[1] Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow and Kolomna, vol. 3, Discourse 57 on the Annunciation. In Russian.

[2] Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, *Ascetic Experience*, vol. I. In Russian.

[3] Ibid.

[4] *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, ch. 2, III, sec. 8. P.G. 3, col. 437.

[5] See for instance, the face of Apostle Paul (p. 111), of St. George the Martyr (p. 126) and others.

God is the God of order and of peace."[1] Disorder is an attribute of the fallen man, the consequence of his fall. This does not mean, of course, that the body ceases to be what it is; not only does it remain a body but, as we have said earlier, it preserves all the physical peculiarities of the given person. But they are depicted in the icon in such a manner that it shows not the earthly countenance of a man as does a portrait, but his glorified eternal face.[2]

If this language of icons has become unfamiliar to us and seems "naive" and "primitive", the reason is not that the icon has "outlived" or lost its vital power and significance, but that "even the knowledge that the human body is capable of spiritual comfort... is lost by men."[3]

The method mentioned above does more than convey symbolically, by means of the image, the transfigured state of the saint; it also has a definite creative and instructive significance. It addresses itself to us and gives guidance and instruction as to how we should comport ourselves in our prayer, our communion with God. It shows us that our senses should not be dispersed and distracted from prayer by manifestations of the external world. We find a beautiful verbal illustration of this method of iconography in the Philokalia, in the words of St. Antony the Great: "This Spirit", he says, "combining with the mind... teaches it to keep the body in order—all of it, from head to foot: the eyes, to see with purity; the ears, to listen in peace, not to delight in slander, gossip and abuse; the tongue, to say only what is good; ... the hands, to be above all brought into movement only to be raised in prayer and for works of mercy...; the stomach, to keep the use of food and drink within the necessary limits...; the feet, to walk rightly and follow the will of God... In this way the whole body becomes trained in good and undergoes a change, submitting to the rule of the Holy Spirit, so that in the end it begins in some measure to share in such properties of the spiritual body, as it is to receive at the resurrection of the just."[4] Thus the icon does not cut itself off from the world, does not lock itself up within itself. The fact that it addresses itself to the world is also emphasised by the fact that saints are usually represented turned towards the congregation, either full-face or three-quarters. They are hardly ever represented in profile even in complex compositions where their general movement is towards the central point of the composition and of its significance. In a certain sense the profile breaks communion, it is already the beginning of absence. Therefore it is allowed chiefly in the case of persons who have not yet attained sanctity. (See for instance the shepherds or the wise men in the icon of the Nativity of Christ.)

The icon never strives to stir the emotions of the faithful. Its task is not to provoke in them one or another natural human emotion, but to guide every emotion as well as the reason and all the other faculties of human nature on the way towards transfiguration. As we have said earlier, sanctification by grace does not eliminate any faculties of this nature, just as fire does not eliminate the properties of iron. In the same way the icon, in depicting the body of a man with all its peculiarities, does not eliminate anything human: it does not exclude either the psychological or the worldly element. It also transmits the feelings of a person (the perturbation of the Mother of God in the Annunciation, the consternation of the Apostles in the Transfiguration, etc.), his knowledge, his artistic creativeness (see, for instance, the account of the icon of the Nativity) and the particular external occupation, be it ecclesiastical (a Church dignitary, a monk) or temporal (a prince, a warrior, a doctor...) which the given saint has transformed into spiritual endeavour. But, just as in the Holy Scriptures, the whole load of human thoughts, feelings and knowledge is represented in the icon at its point of contact with the world of Divine Grace, and in this contact all that is not purified is burnt up as by fire. Every manifestation of human nature acquires meaning, becomes illumined, finds its true place and significance. Thus it is precisely in the icon that all human feelings, thoughts and actions, as well as the body itself, are given their full value.

Thus the icon is both the way and the means; it is prayer itself. Hence its hieratic quality, its majestic simplicity and calmness of movement; hence the rhythm

[1] St. Simeon the New Theologian, ibid. Discourse 15, par. 2, p. 143. In Russian.

[2] As an example of the translation of the earthly aspect of a saint into an icon, let us cite the following case: at the disinterment in 1558 on the remains of St. Nicetas, archbishop of Novgorod, remains which proved uncorrupted, a posthumous portrait was made of his face and sent to the Church authorities with the following letter: "Sir, for the sake of the saint's mercy, we have sent you on paper an image of St. Nicetas, the Bishop, ... and you, Sir, please order an icon to be painted—an image of the saint, from this original." (N. P. Kondakov, *The Russian Icon*, III, part 1, p. 19.)

[3] Bishop Ignatius Brianchaninov, ibid.

[4] *Philokalia*, Russian translation, 1877, vol. I, p. 21, and *Early Fathers from the Philokalia*, London, 1954, p. 41.

of its lines, the rhythm and joyfulness of its colours, which spring from perfection of inner harmony.[1] A man's transfiguration communicates itself to all the surroundings, for an attribute of holiness is the sanctification of all the surrounding world with which a saint comes into contact. Sanctity has not only a personal, but also a general human, as well as a cosmic significance. Therefore all the visible world represented in the icon changes, becomes the image of the future unity of the whole creation—the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit. In accordance with this, all that is depicted in the icon reflects not the disorder of our sinful world, but Divine order, peace, a realm governed not by earthly logic, not by human morality, but by Divine Grace. It is the new order in the new creation. This is why what we see in the icon is so unlike what we see in ordinary life. The Divine Light permeates all things, so there is no source of light, which would illumine objects from one side or another; objects cast no shadows, for no shadows exist in the Kingdom of God. All is bathed in light, and in their technical language iconographers call "light" the background of the icon. People do not gesticulate; their movements are not disorderly, not haphazard. They officiate, and each of their movements bears a sacramental liturgic character. Beginning with the clothes of the saint, everything loses its usual haphazard character: people, landscape, architecture, animals. Together with the form of the saint himself, all are governed by one rhythmic law, all are centered on the spiritual content and act as one harmonious whole: the earth, the vegetable and animal kingdoms are not depicted with a view to bringing the spectator closer to what we see in the surrounding reality, but in order to make nature itself participate in the transfiguration of man and consequently to connect it with existence outside time. Just as all creation fell through man's fall, so it is made holy through his holiness. Therefore there can be no separate icon of creatures, without man.

Architecture plays a peculiar role of its own in the icon. While it serves, as does landscape, to denote that the event depicted in the icon is in truth connected historically with a definite place, it never contains this event inside itself, but merely serves as a background to it, for, according to the very meaning of the icon, the action is not enclosed in or limited to a particular place, just as, while being manifested in time, it is not limited to a certain time. Thus a scene which takes place inside a building is always shown as taking place with the building as background. It was only in the seventeenth century that iconographers, influenced by the West, began to depict events as taking place inside a building. Architectural buildings are connected with the human figure by the general meaning and composition, but very often there is no logical link between them (see, for instance, p. 134 St. Macarius of Unsha and p. 115 the Evangelist Luke). If we compare the manner in which an icon represents a human figure with the manner in which it depicts a building, we shall see a great difference between them. With rare exceptions, the human figure is always constructed correctly—everything is in its right place. The same applies to the clothes: their details, the folds, etc. are perfectly logical. But architecture, both in form and grouping is often contrary to human logic and in separate details is emphatically illogical. Doors and windows are often pierced in wrong places, their size does not correspond to their functions, etc. (see a characteristic example in the icon of the Annunciation, p. 171, where the foot of an incomprehensible structure hangs over an equally incomprehensible opening in the ceiling). The meaning of this phenomenon is that architecture is the only element in the icon with the help of which it is possible to show clearly that the action taking place before our eyes is outside the laws of human logic, outside the laws of earthly existence. It is noteworthy that this illogical character of architecture existed in Russian icons right up to the beginning of decadence, that is, up to the moment when, at the end of the XVIth and the beginning of the XVIIth centuries, the understanding of the iconographic language began to be lost. From that time onwards the architecture becomes logical and there ensues a fantastic, fairy-tale profusion of purely logical architectural forms.

It is clear from the aforesaid that the task of the icon in no way includes the creation of an illusion of the sub-

[1] Although the icon is above all a language of colours, which are as symbolical as the form and the lines, we do not touch here upon their symbolism and deal very little with it in the accounts of individual icons because, with the exception of some fundamental colours, its meaning has been almost entirely lost in the centuries. Consequently there is a danger of individual arbitrary interpretations, which lead to the realm of conjectures, at times very tempting, but deprived of authenticity and therefore not always, or rather never convincing, although E. Trubetskoy has succeeded in noting down certain general principles. (See: *Icons: Theology in Color*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975, Revised Edition 1983.) Starting from the general principle of Orthodox symbolism, we must say that one should not attach a symbolical meaning to every shade, nor in the iconography—to every detail and every line of the drawing. In both cases symbolism is only in the fundamentals: in the principal colours and general lines.

ject or event it depicts, for, according to its very definition, the icon (that is, the image) is opposed to illusion. When we look at it, we not only know but also see that we stand not before the person or the event itself, but before its image, that is, before an object which, by its very nature, is fundamentally different from its prototype. This excludes all attempts to create an illusion of real space or volume. In the icon space and volume are limited to the surface of the panel and must not create an artificial impression of going beyond it. Yet it is not two-dimensional art in the sense that Eastern art is two-dimensional. The pictorial idea of volume always exists in the icon in the treatment of figures, faces, garments, buildings, etc. The composition of an icon is always spatial and has a definite depth. It expresses three dimensions, but these three dimensions never violate the plane of the panel. Any violation of this plane, however partial, damages the meaning of the icon. The preservation of the reality of the plane is greatly assisted by so-called inverse perspective, the point of departure of which lies not in the depth of the image, but in front of the image, as it were in the spectator himself.[1] A man stands, as it were, at the start of a pathway which is not concentrated on some point in depth, but which unfolds itself before him in all its immensity. Inverse perspective does not draw in the eye of the spectator; on the contrary it holds it back, precluding the possibility of its penetrating and entering into the image in depth; and it concentrates the attention on the image itself.

The iconographic symbolism that we have described naturally gives rise to the question: on what grounds do we assert that the symbols used to convey the transfigured state of man do actually indicate it, and are not leading us to an invented, fantastic world? We can answer this question with the words of Apostle Paul: we "are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb. xii, 1). And indeed, if in the iconography of saints and of events of the Holy Scriptures the Church has adopted the versions which express historical reality most fully and exactly, the reality of the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit is communicated by men who have acquired the rudiments of this Kingdom while still here, in the conditions of our earthly life. Just as some great spirituals have left us verbal descriptions of the Kingdom of God, which was within them (Luke xvii, 21), so others have also left descriptions of it, but in visible images, in the language of artistic symbols; and their testimony is just as authentic. It is the same revealed theology, only in images instead of words. It is a kind of drawing from nature by means of symbols, as are the verbal descriptions of the holy Fathers. "For we speak of it from contemplation", testifies St. Simeon the New Theologian, "therefore what we relate should be called a record of what has been contemplated rather than an idea" (νόημα).[2] The holy image, just like the Holy Scriptures, transmits not human ideas and conceptions of truth, but truth itself—the Divine revelation. Neither historical nor spiritual reality admit of any invention. Therefore, as we have said, the art of the Church is realistic in the strictest sense of the word, both in its iconography and in its symbolism. In true Church art there is no idealisation, just as it does not exist in the Holy Scriptures or the Liturgy. Nor can it exist there, for idealisation introduces a subjective, limiting element and so inevitably mutilates, or distorts truth to a greater or less extent. The current opinion that Church art, and in particular the icon, are idealistic, that the icon conveys a certain higher idea, an opinion based on the fact that the realism of this art is unlike anything usually understood by this word, is pure misunderstanding. In actual fact it is just the reverse: as soon as idealisation appears in an image it ceases to be an icon. This is quite intelligible for, from himself, a man can give an account only about himself. No one can give an account of Divine life from himself. "Who can speak from himself of some object he has not seen before?... How is it possible to speak and proclaim anything about God, about Divine things and about God's saints, that is, how can one say what kind of communion with God these saints are granted and what is that knowledge of God, which is within them and which produces ineffable actions in their hearts—how can anything of this be said by a man who has not already himself been illumined by the light of knowledge?"[3] Consequently an icon cannot be invented. Only those who know from personal experience the state it portrays can create images corresponding to it

[1] The opinion that the ancient iconographers did not know direct and therefore used inverse perspective has no foundation and is refuted by the icon itself. If we look with attention at Rublev's icon of the Trinity, for example (p. 198) we see that both perspectives are used in it: the direct and the inverse. Thus the opening cavity for the drawer in the table and the building are represented in direct perspective, while the foot-stools of the Angels, the table itself and the heads of the Angels are in inverse perspective. This method of combining the two perspectives is not rare in ancient icons; still, preference is always given to inverse perspective.

[2] Ibid. Discourse 63, par. 3, p. 115. In Russian.

[3] St. Simeon the New Theologian, ibid. p. 116.

which are truly "a revelation and evidence of things hidden"[1], in other words, evidence of man's participation in the life of the transfigured world he contemplates, just as Moses created images such as he had seen and made cherubims as he had seen them[2], that is, after the pattern he had seen in the mountain (Ex. xxv, 9). Only such an image can be authentic and convincing and can thus show us the way and direct us to God. No artistic fantasy, no perfection of technique, no artistic gift can replace actual knowledge, drawn from "seeing and contemplating".[3]

It would, of course, be wrong to conclude that saints alone can paint icons. The Church does not consist of saints alone. All its members leading a sacramental life have the right and the duty to follow in their footsteps. Therefore every Orthodox iconographer, living in the Tradition, can make genuine icons. Still, the inexhaustible source feeding Church art is the Holy Spirit Himself, Who acts through the Church by means of men illumined by Divine grace; men who have attained to direct knowledge of God and communion with Him and who have therefore been glorified by the Church as saint-iconographers. Thus the role of Tradition is not limited to transmitting the actual fact of the existence of an icon. On the one hand it transmits the image of an event from Sacred History, or of a saint glorified by the Church, as a remembrance of the event or the saint. On the other hand it is a constant inexhaustible fountain of knowledge communicated to the Church by the Holy Spirit. Therefore the Church has repeatedly emphasised the necessity to follow the Tradition, either through rulings of Councils, or through the voice of its dignitaries, and enjoined that icons should be painted "as the ancient holy iconographers painted them". "Portray in colours according to the Tradition;" says St. Simeon of Thessalonica, "this is painting as true as what is written in books and the grace of God rests on it, for what is portrayed is holy."[4]

For this reason, the creation of an icon belongs to a category fundamentally different from that usually understood by this word. It has the character of catholic (soborny), not personal, creation. The iconographer transmits not his own "idea" (*νόημα*), but "a description of what is contemplated", that is factual knowledge, something seen if not by himself, by a trustworthy witness. The experience of this witness, who received and transmitted the revelation, is increased by the addition of the experience of all those who have received it after him. In this way the singleness of the revealed truth is joined with the multiform personal experience of those receiving it. In order to receive and pass on the testimony, the iconographer must not only believe that it is genuine, but must also share in the life, by which the witness of the revelation lived, must follow the same way, that is, be a member of the body of the Church. Only then can he transmit the testimony received consciously and exactly. Hence the necessity for continual participation in the sacramental life of the Church; hence also the moral demands the Church makes of iconographers. For a true iconographer, creation is the way of asceticism and prayer, that is, essentially, a monastic way. Although the beauty and content of an icon are perceived by each spectator subjectively, in accordance with his capacities, they are expressed by the iconographer objectively, through consciously surmounting his own "I" and subjugating it to the revealed truth—the authority of the Tradition. The usual "I see it like that", "I understand it like that", is entirely excluded in this case. The iconographer works not for himself, not for his own glory, but to the glory of God. Therefore an icon is never signed. The freedom of an iconographer consists not in an untrammelled expression of his personality, of his "I",[5] but in his "liberation from all passions and

[1] St. John of Damascus. *Third Discourse in Defence of Holy Icons*, ch. 17.; P.G. 96, col. 1337B.

[2] St. Patriarch Tarasius, Acts of the VIIth Oecumenical Council, Act 4. Mansi, Coll. Conc. XIII, coll. 5–7.

[3] St. Simeon the New Theologian, ibid. p. 115.

[4] Dialogue against heresies, c. 23.; P.G. 155, col. 113D.

[5] On this plane the creative art of an iconographer is diametrically opposed to the creations of Western or Westernised religious art, where freedom is understood as a totally untrammelled expression of the artist's personality, of his "I", and where individual emotions, beliefs, understanding and the experience of one or another human personality are placed above the profession of the objective truth of Divine revelation. Without the sacrament of confession, which purifies through repentance, the whole creative work of a painter becomes as it were a public confession. Without repentance, this public confession does not purify or liberate the artist, but infects the spectator with all he has in him. Here the "freedom" of the artist is manifested at the expense of the freedom of the spectator, on whom is imposed the personal perception of the artist, screening him off from the reality of the Church. An artist who consciously or unconsciously follows this course, is the slave of his senses and his emotions and so the image he creates inevitably loses its liturgic content and significance. Moreover an individualistic approach to art in the Church destroys its unity, breaks it up, deprives individual artists of the link with one another and with the Church. In other words, the principle of catholicity is replaced by the cult of individuality, exclusiveness, originality, an extreme mani-

lusts of the world and the flesh".[1] It is the spiritual freedom of which Apostle Paul speaks, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. iii, 17). The guiding principle on this way is the iconographic Canon mentioned above. It represents not a sum-total of external regulations restricting the creativeness of the artist, but an inner necessity consciously accepted as a constructive rule, as one of the aspects of Church Tradition, parallel with the liturgic, ascetic and other traditions. In other words, the Canon is the form which the Church gives to the subjugation of the human will to the will of God, their union, and this form actually enables the personality not to be the slave of its sinful nature, but to overcome it, subjugate it, be "master of its own actions and free"[2], or as Apostle Paul says, "All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any" (1 Cor. vi, 12). This way gives a maximum freedom to the creative art of a man, and the source which feeds it is the grace of the Holy Spirit. Therefore only the creative art of the Church is a direct participation in the Divine act, an action fully liturgic and therefore the most free.

The degree to which art has liturgic quality is in direct ratio to the spiritual freedom of the artist. An icon may be technically perfect but of a very low spiritual level; and conversely, there are icons roughly and primitively painted which stand on a very high spiritual level.

The task of an iconographer has much in common with the task of a priest officiating. Theodosius the Hermit draws a definite parallel between them. He says, "The Divine Service of icon representations draws its origin from the holy Apostles. The priest and the iconographer should be either chaste, or married and living in accordance with the law; for the priest, officiating with divine words, prepares the Body of which we participate for the remission of sins; while the artist, instead of using words, draws and images a body and gives it life, and we venerate icons for the sake of their prototypes."[3] Just as the priest can neither alter liturgic texts at his discretion nor bring into their reading any emotions, such as may impress upon the faithful his personal state or perception, so also an iconographer must conform to the image consecrated by the Church, introducing no personal or emotional content, but placing all those who pray before one and the same reality and leaving each person free to react to the extent of his possibilities and in accordance with his character, his needs, his circumstances, and so forth. Moreover, just as a priest officiates according to his natural gifts and peculiarities, so an iconographer transmits an image according to his character, gifts and technical proficiency.

Iconography, therefore, is not copying. It is far from being impersonal, for to follow Tradition never shackles the creative powers of the iconographer, whose individuality expresses itself in the composition as well as in the colour and line. But the personal is here much more subtle than in other arts and so often escapes superficial observation. The absence of identical icons has been noted long ago. Indeed, among icons on the same subject, although they are sometimes remarkably alike, we never find two absolutely identical icons (except in cases of deliberate copying in more modern times). Icons are not copied but are painted from, which means their free creative transposition.

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Starting from the meaning and content of the icon, the Fathers of the VIIth Oecumenical Council confirmed that the blessed state of a man could be expressed by means of matter sanctified by the Incarnation of God; and they ordained the setting up of icons for veneration everywhere, in the same way as the image of the holy life-giving Cross, "in the holy churches of God, on sacred vessels and vestments, on walls and panels, in houses and on roadways."[4] This ordinance of the holy Council shows that in the consciousness of the Church the role of the icon, transmitted by Tradition, is not limited to preserving a memory of the sacred past. Its role, both in the Church and in the world, is not conservative but dynamically creative. The icon is regarded as one of the ways by means of which it is possible and necessary to strive to achieve the task set before mankind, to achieve likeness to the prototype, to embody in life

festation of which is seen, for instance, in the newly decorated Roman Catholic Church in Assy (France). In this sense the example of Bernadette of Lourdes is very significant: "Shown an album of pictures of Our Lady, she rejected with horror the Renaissance ones: she tolerated Fra Angelico's; but lingered with a certain satisfaction over quite early, rigid, depersonalised mosaics or frescos." (Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J., *What the Saints looked like*, Catholic Truth Society, B. 397, p. 4.)

[1] St. Simeon the New Theologian, Discourse 87, ibid. p. 456.

[2] St. John of Damascus, *On the Orthodox Faith*, Book II, ch. 27. P.G. 94, col. 960D.

[3] *The Iconographic Manual of Bolshakov*, edited by A. I. Ouspensky, Moscow, 1903, p. 3.

[4] Ordinance of VIIth Oecumenical Council.

what was manifested and transmitted by God-Man. With this significance, icons are placed everywhere as the revelation of the future sanctification of the world, of its coming transfiguration, as the pattern of its realisation and, finally, as the promulgation of grace and the presence in the world of holy objects, which sanctify. "For the saints were filled with the Holy Spirit even in their lifetime. After their death too the grace of the Holy Spirit inexhaustibly dwells in their souls and in their bodies lying in their graves, in their countenances and in their holy images."[1]

Thus, in the XIVth century, in reply to the scholastic doctrine advanced in the controversy over the light of Tabor, when the Church was forced to set down as a dogmatic definition its teaching on the deification of man, it already taught of the action in man of Divine energy, of his illumination by grace, his transfiguration, not only by means of facts, through the spiritual experience of its saints, but also by images, in the language of art. This doubly realistic language of Church art, which made its appearance in the early Christian era, received its dogmatic confirmation in connection with the establishment of the dogma of the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity ("God became man"), in the first period of Church history, which culminated in the Triumph of Orthodoxy. In the second period, in the course of the six centuries following the Iconoclasts, when the central question was that of the Holy Spirit in connection with the defence of the second aspect of the same dogma ("that man might become god"), the pictorial language of the Church was made more perfect and precise. This period saw the final shaping of the iconographic language which became classical and which entirely corresponds to the content of the icon. This was the period of the blossoming of Church art in different Orthodox countries: in Greece, in the Balkans, in Russia, in Georgia and elsewhere.

However, as sainthood itself, of which the icon is a reflection, manifests itself differently in different peoples and epochs and corresponds to their peculiarities, so each nation and each period, by transmitting in images the same truth, creates different types of icons, at times very similar, but often differing greatly from one another. There is no contradiction in this, for a single revelation manifests itself in different aspects in accordance with the requirements of one or another epoch, one or another people. Thus the stern hieratic character of the Byzantine icons is not opposed to the tenderness and warmth of Russion icons, for God is not only the Almighty and the stern Judge, but also the Saviour of the world, Who sacrificed Himself for the sins of men. As in the early period, so also later, the icon is not limited to expressing only the dogmatic, spiritual, that is, the inner life of the Church. Through the men who create it, it has a living link with the outer world, manifesting the spiritual countenance of each nation, its character, its history, responding to all the complex problems of time and place by means and methods corresponding to each epoch, and each people. But however strongly the features connecting the icon with the outer world are displayed, they are still only external traits and not the essence of the icon which consists, above all, in expressing Church dogma.

In accordance with the gift of expression, belonging to an individual man and to a whole nation, and also in accordance with the measure in which the revelation is experienced in practice, it is transmitted in the image with greater or less perfection. These two conditions lie at the basis of both the similarities and the differences, which exist between icons of different peoples and periods. The degree to which the gift of expression is subordinated to the revelation it has to express, determines the spiritual level and the purity of the image. In this sense the most characteristic example is that of Byzantium and Russia, the two countries where Church art reached the highest level of expression. The art of Byzantium, ascetic and stern, solemn and refined does not always reach the spiritual height and purity characteristic of the general level of Russian iconography. It grew and was formed in times of struggle and this struggle left its imprint upon it. Byzantium is the fruit of the culture of the ancient world, whose rich and varied inheritance it was called on to introduce into the Church. In this task, its inherent gift for profound and subtle thought and word enabled it to bring into the Church all that concerned the verbal language of the Church. It produced great theologians; it played a great role in the dogmatic struggle of the Church, and in particular the decisive role in the struggle for the icon. And yet, in the image itself, despite the high level of artistic expression, there often remains some trace of the antique inheritance it had not quite outlived, which makes itself felt, in greater or less degree, in different aspects

[1] St. John of Damascus, 1st Discourse in Defence of Holy Icons, par. 19.; P.G. 94, col. 1249CD.

which reflect on the spiritual purity of the image.[1] Even the masterpieces of the classical period of that art, such as the XIIth century mosaics of St. Sophia in Constantinople, are not entirely devoid of sensual grossness; one feels in them that peace of soul and body has not yet been completely attained.[2] And IXth century mosaics in the same St. Sophia are definitely imbued with antique sensuality.[3] Later too we often meet with the same traces of antique art and dependence on matter, both in Byzantine and in subsequent Greek icons.

On the other hand Russia, which was not bound by the complex inheritance of antiquity and the roots of whose culture were much less deep, attained to an exceptionally high level and purity of image, which makes Russian iconography outstanding among all the ramifications of Orthodox iconography. It was indeed given to Russia to produce that perfection of the pictorial language of the icon, which revealed with such great force the depth of meaning of the liturgic image, its spirituality. It can be said that if Byzantium was preeminent in giving the world theology expressed in words, theology expressed in the image was given preeminently by Russia. It is characteristic in this sense that until the times of Peter the Great there are few spiritual writers among Russian saints; on the other hand many saints were iconographers, from plain monks to metropolitans. The Russian icon is no less ascetic than the Byzantine. Yet its asceticism is of quite another order. Here the accent is not on the arduousness of the endeavour, but on the joy brought by its fruit, on the easiness and lightness of the Lord's yoke, of which He Himself speaks in the Gospels, which are read on the days of the holy ascetics, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. xi, 29–30). The Russian icon is the highest expression in art of godlike humility. This is why, in spite of its extremely deep meaning, it has a child-like lightness and joy and is full of tranquil peace and warmth. Having come into contact through Byzantium with the traditions of the ancient world, especially in their basic hellenism and not in their Roman version, Russian iconography was not fascinated by the charm of this inheritance. It uses it only as a means, introduces it completely into the Church, and transfigures it; and thus the beauty of antique art acquires its true meaning in the transfigured countenance of the Russian icon.[4]

Together with Christianity, Russia received from Byzantium at the end of the Xth century an already established liturgical image, a formulated doctrine concerning it and a mature technique worked out in the course of centuries. Its first teachers were visiting Greeks, masters of the classical period of Byzantine art, who from the very beginning, in the frescos of the first churches, as for instance in St. Sophia of Kiev (1037–1161/67), used Russian artists as assistants.[5] The activity of their pupils, the first known Russian saint-iconographers, belongs to the XIth century. These were monks of the Kiev-Pechersky monastery: St. Alipy, who died about 1114 and his collaborator St. Gregory. St. Alipy is regarded as the father of Russian iconography. He began to paint icons from childhood under visiting Greek masters; later he became a monk, and was ordained into priesthood. He was distinguished by a never flagging diligence, humility, chastity, patience, fasting and love for meditation on divine subjects. "Never were you angered by those who offended you, nor returned evil for evil", says the Church hymn in his

[1] In general, the development of Church art in Byzantium was "connected with a whole series of long-drawn crises—renaissances of antique classical art... Such a recrudescence of antique art was very strong in the IVth century, when triumphant Christianity had adopted almost *in toto* the pictorial apparatus of antiquity. Analogous returns to classical art were phenomena which occurred sporadically in Byzantium" (V. Lazarev, *History of Byzantine Painting*, vol. I, p. 39. In Russian). Essentially, these recrudescences of ancient classical art were nothing more than echoes, in the realm of Church art, of the general process of introducing everything into the Church, a process affecting all sides of the world outlook of antiquity. In this process of infusion into Christianity, there came into the Church many things which did not belong to it and so could not be assimilated, but nevertheless left their imprint on the art of the Church. Thus the effect of these "renaissances" was to introduce into this art the illusory and sensual character of pagan art, which is totally alien to Orthodoxy. Much later the same elements, artificially resurrected in the Italian Renaissance, obtruded themselves into Church art under the guise of naturalism, idealism, and so forth.

[2] For example the Deisis, a mosaic of the Southern gallery.

[3] For example the mosaics of the apse: the enthroned Mother of God with the Child and Archangel Gabriel on the vault of the sanctuary.

[4] Russian iconography represents the largest and so far the most fully explored field of Orthodox Church art. Therefore in what follows we dwell briefly on the outlines of this art alone, not touching on the art of other Orthodox countries.

[5] V. Lazarev, op. cit. p. 94. Since Christianity had spread in Russia even before the Xth century, there seems no doubt that local Russian iconographers already existed in periods earlier than the official acceptance of the Christian religion, although we have no positive data about this.

honour.[1] He was one of the ascetic monks who made the Kiev-Pechersky Lavra famous.[2] Through St. Alipy and Gregory Russian Church art, from its very inception, was guided by men enlightened by knowledge received through direct revelation, of which Russian iconography had such a number later. Unfortunately, despite evidence as to a great number of icons painted by these first iconographers, there exist to-day only suppositions and conjectures about them; we have no authoritative information. Generally we can form an idea of the Kiev period of Russian Church art mainly from frescos and mosaics. The Tartar invasion of the middle of the XIIIth century, which involved the greater part of Russia, not only destroyed many existing icons but considerably hindered the production of new ones. Most of the very few icons of this period that have been preserved and so far discovered belong to the end of the XIth, the XIIth and the XIIIth centuries. Moreover, almost all of them are more or less correctly attributed to Novgorod, which also was a source of art in the XIth century.

Icons of the pre-Mongolian period have the excessively monumental character which distinguishes mural paintings, under the influence of which Russian iconography remained even in the XIVth century, and a laconic character of artistic expression both in composition and in the figures, gestures, draperies, etc. The prevailing colours are dark, restrained and gloomy. Yet already in the XIIIth century this gloomy colouring begins to be replaced by the bright and variegated colours characteristic of Russian art. A greater inner and outer dynamism and a greater tendency to preserve the plane surface make their appearance. The early icons, while bearing Russian features, are still more or less dependent on Greek patterns. Presumably the XIIth century was a period of assimilating principles and forms of Church art inherited from Byzantium; in the XIIIth century these already begin to assume the national Russian aspect, which found its final expression in the XIVth century.[3] Icons of this period are distinguished by freshness and directness of expression, vivid colours, sense of rhythm and simplicity of composition. The activity of the saint-iconographers St. Peter, Metropolitan of Moscow (died 1326), and St. Theodore, Archbishop of Rostov (died 1394), also belong to this period.

The XIVth, XVth and the first half of the XVIth centuries represent the finest flowering of Russian iconography which coincides with the finest flowering of Russian sainthood, namely that of the ascetic type, which declines sharply in the second half of the XVIth century. This time produced the greatest number of canonised saints, especially the XVth century. From 1420 to 1500 the number of canonised saints reached fifty.

The borderline between the XIVth and the XVth centuries is connected with the name of the greatest iconographer, St. Andrew (Rublev) who worked with his

[1] Troparion, Tone 8. Canon to the saint.

[2] See M. and V. I. Ouspensky: *Notes on ancient Russian iconography. St. Alipy and A. Rublev*, p. 6. St. Petersburg, 1901. In Russian.

[3] Local peculiarities influence and determine also the particular character of artistic creation. For instance, the preference of the people of Novgorod for the simple, the powerful and the expressive was reflected also in the Church art of Novgorod. I. Grabar gives a beautiful description of this art: "The ideal of the man of Novgorod is strength, and beauty—the beauty of strength. His art is at times clumsy, but always magnificent, for it is strong, majestic, overwhelming. Such is the iconography of Novgorod—vivid in colour, strong and daring, with sure brush-work, with outlines made by a confident hand, decisively and imperiously." (I. Grabar, *Problems of Restoration*, p. 57, Moscow, 1926. In Russian.) The artists of Novgorod use pure unblended colours in which red, green and yellow predominate. The vivid colourfulness of Novgorod icons is based on contrasts of opposing colours. The icons are dynamic in composition and drawing.

The icons of Suzdal are distinguished by their aristocratic character and exquisiteness and elegance of proportion and line. They have "a peculiarity which distinguishes them sharply from those of Novgorod. Their general tone is always cool, tinged with blue and silver as opposed to those of Novgorod, which are invariably weighted towards warm yellow and golden hues. In Novgorod, ochre and vermilion predominate, but ochre never predominates in a Suzdal icon and even if used is always subordinated to other hues, which produce the impression of a scale of silvery-blues." (*Problems of Restoration*, ibid. p. 61.)

The general colour of Pskov icons is usually dark and is limited to three hues, not counting the background—red, brown and dark green, and at times only to two—the red and the green. It is typical for a Pskov master to use gold to indicate high-lights, by means of parallel or radiating lines. (G. N. Dmitriev, *Guide to the Russian State Museum*, 1940. In Russian.)

The icons of Vladimir and then of Moscow, which followed it and became dominant in the XIVth century, differ from other icons in that they are based on an exact equilibrium of different hues for the purpose of creating a harmonious whole. Owing to this the palette of the Vladimir and later of the Moscow school is distinguished not so much by the intensity, as by the harmony of its colours, in spite of the existence of individual vivid tones (A. I. Anisimov, *Masterpieces of Russian Painting*, London, 1930). In contrast to the elongated faces of Novgorod icons, those of Moscow have the characteristic of rounded faces.

Naturally, all these features have a merely relative and rather conventional value and, for modern knowledge, are only provisional. In addition to the centres already mentioned there were of course others, not yet investigated, as for instance Smolensk, Tver, Riazan and others. Moreover, constant discovery of new icons renders it necessary to make frequent amendments.

friend and teacher, St. Daniel (the Black). In the last ten years a whole series of frescos and icons painted by him have come to light, the first place among which is occupied by his unsurpassed Trinity. The extraordinary depth of the spiritual vision of St. Andrew found its expression through his exceptional artistic talent. The creative art of Andrew Rublev is the most vivid manifestation in Russian iconography of the antique heritage. All the beauty of antique art here comes to life, filled with a new and true meaning. His art is distinguished by a youthful freshness, a sense of measure, a supreme harmony of colours, an enchanting rhythm and music of line. The influence of St. Andrew on Russian Church art was immense. References to him have been preserved in manuals of iconography, and the Council convoked to decide questions connected with iconography in 1551 in Moscow by the Metropolitan Makary, himself an iconographer, accepted the following resolution: "to paint icons from ancient patterns, as did the Greek iconographers and as did Andrew Rublev and other celebrated artists".[1] If any of his icons perished, it was recorded in the annals as an event of great consequence and public importance. The art of St. Andrew left its impression on all XVth century Russian Church art which, in that period, reached the height of its artistic expression. It is the classical period of Russian iconography. The masters of the XVth century attain to an extraordinary perfection in the control of line, in skill in inserting figures into a defined space, finding excellence of correlation between silhouette and free background. This century is in many ways a repetition of the preceding one, but differs from the latter in its greater equilibrium and more perfect structure. An exceptional sense of rhythm permeating everything, an extraordinary purity and depth of tone, the strength and joyousness of colours fully express the joy and serenity of an art which has reached its maturity and is blended with an unusual depth of spiritual insight.

The second half of the XVth and the beginning of the XVIth centuries are connected with another genius whose name ranks with that of St. Andrew—Dionysius who worked with his sons. His art is based on the Rublev tradition and represents a brilliant culmination to Russian XVth century iconography. Yet this culmination is to a certain extent connected with a preponderance of the external means of expression. Towards the end of the XVth and the beginning of the XVIth centuries painting often becomes exquisite and formally refined. This period shows a great perfection of technique, elegance of lines, exquisiteness of forms and colour. The art of Dionysius is full of a special lively joyousness, the proportions of his figures are elongated and exquisite with an accentuated grace of movements. The outlines are flowing, smooth and strong. His limpid colours with their delicate greens, pinks, pale blues and yellows have a singularly musical quality.

The XVIth century preserved in full the impregnation of the image by the Spirit; nor do we see the vividness of colours diminish; on the contrary, they assume a still richer variety of shades. This century, like the preceding one, continues to produce remarkable icons. Yet in its second half, the majestic simplicity and classical moderation, which had endured throughout centuries, begin to totter. The broad planes and the monumental feeling of the image, the classical rhythm and the antique purity and strength of colour also disappear. There appears a desire for complexity, virtuosity and abundance of details. The hues become darker and duller and in the place of the former limpid light colours, opaque earth-hued shades make their appearance which, combined with gold, create an impression of pompous and somewhat gloomy splendour. This period is a turning point in Russian iconography. The dogmatic meaning of the icon ceases to be felt as the essential point and the narrative moment frequently assumes a dominant role (see the icon of the Nativity of Christ, p. 160). A whole series of new subjects appear suggested by the influence of Western prints.

This period and the beginning of the XVIIth century is connected with the activity of the new Stroganov school, formed in north-east Russia under the influence of the Stroganov family who were great lovers of iconography. The characteristic feature of Stroganov masters of that time are complex icons with many small-scale figures and a minute finish. They are distinguished by a remarkable fineness and virtuosity of execution and resemble jewelled objets d'art. The design is complicated and rich in details; the colouring tends to conform to one general hue, thus losing the brightness of the individual colours.

In the XVIIth century the decline of Church art sets in. This decline was the result of a deep spiritual crisis, a secularisation of religious consciousness, thanks to which, despite the vigorous opposition of the Church[2], there

[1] N. V. Pokrovsky, *Notes on Monuments of Russian Iconography and Art*, p. 356. St. Petersburg, 1900. In Russian.

[2] From the moment that distortions began to appear in Church art and the Church was forced to make official pronouncements concerning iconography, it always protected the canonical forms of liturgic art, both through Councils (for instance, the Council of the Hundred Chap-

began the penetration not merely of separate elements but of the very principles of Western religious art, which are alien to Orthodoxy. The dogmatic content of the icon vanishes from the consciousness of men and symbolical realism becomes an incomprehensible language for iconographers fallen under the influence of the West. The link with Tradition is broken. Church art becomes secularised under the influence of the nascent secular realistic art, whose father is the famous iconographer Simon Oushakov. This secularisation is a reflection in the domain of art of the general secularisation of the life of the Church. The result is a mixing of Church image and worldly image, of Church and world. Symbolical realism, based on spiritual experience and vision, disappears through the absence of the latter and through losing its link with Tradition. This fact gives birth to an image which no longer testifies to the transfigured state of man—to spiritual reality—but expresses different ideas and opinions connected with this reality; thus what is realism in secular art becomes idealism when applied to Church art. This also gives rise to a more or less arbitrary treatment of the subject itself, which becomes merely an occasion to express this or that idea or conception, inevitably leading to a distortion of historical reality as well.

Loss of the consciousness of the dogmatic meaning of art inevitably led to the distortion of its very foundations[1] and no artistic gift, no exquisite technique proved able to replace them; so that iconography became half-craft or simply a craft.

Yet the dogmatic consciousness of the image was not lost by the Church and it would be wrong to think that this decadence was the end of the icon. The craft of iconography had always existed side by side with great art; but in the XVIIIth, XIXth and XXth centuries it assumes a dominant significance. But even here "even in times of complete decadence, frescos and icons, deprived of all other merit, arrest the eye by the harmony and strength of the general effect. Even now, on the level of bad commercial production these things have that 'everything in its place' which is so often lacking in modern painting."[2] Such is the force of Church tradition which, even on a low level of artistic creation, preserves echoes of great art. Moreover this artisan level was not and is not an absolute rule. Side by side with the image which had lost its link with the Church Tradition and had become half-worldly or wholly worldly and bad icons painted by artisans, there were always produced and are still being produced icons of a high level, both in Russia and in other Orthodox countries (see p. 130), amid the decadence which had attacked them at different times. Iconographers, who did not desert the iconographic tradition of the Church, have carried through these centuries of decadence and preserved to our times a true liturgic image, often of great spiritual content and high artistic level.

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As we have said, Christianity is the revelation not only of the Word of God but also of the Image of God, in which His Likeness is revealed. This godlike image is the distinctive feature of the New Testament, being the visible witness of the deification of man. The ways of iconography, as means of expressing what regards the Deity, are here the same as the ways of theology. The task of both alike is to express that which cannot be expressed by human means, since such expression will always be imperfect and insufficient. There are no words, nor colours nor lines, which could represent the Kingdom of God as we represent and describe our world. Both theology and iconography are faced with a problem

ters in the XVIth century and the Great Moscow Council in the XVIIth century) and in the persons of its higher dignitaries. Thus at the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the Patriarch Nicon (1652-1658) used to destroy icons painted under Western influence and anathematised all those who would in future paint them or keep them in their homes. The Patriarch Joachim (1679–1690) writes in his testament: "I ordain in the name of the Lord that icons of God-Man and of the most Holy Mother of God and of all the saints should be painted according to old versions ...; and above all that they should not be painted from Latin and German images, which are unseemly, invented in accordance with personal whims, and which corrupt the Tradition of our Church. Such irregular images as exist in churches must be removed." (*Bolshakov Manual*, published by A. I. Ouspensky, Moscow, 1903, in Russian.) In the Greek Church where decadence had set in earlier, already in the XVth century St. Simeon of Thessalonica, in his writing *Against Heresies* (ch. 23), points to elements of secular art penetrating into liturgic art and thus distorting the meaning of the icon: "Again, emphasising all that we have said, holy icons are often painted not in accordance with tradition, but in other manners; they are adorned not with iconographic but with naturalistic clothes and hair, and thus give not the image and likeness of the original, but are painted and adorned without reverence, which is quite opposed to the nature of the holy icon."

[1] Just as religious thought was not always on the level of theology, so artistic creation was not always on the level of genuine iconography even before then. Therefore one cannot take every image for an indisputable authority, since it may correspond to the teaching of the Church, or may not correspond to it and thus lead into error. In other words, one can distort the teaching of the Church by image as well as by word.

[2] I. Grabar, *History of Russian Art* (article by P. Muratov), vol. 6, p. 48. In Russian.

which is absolutely insoluble—to express by means belonging to the created world that which is infinitely above the creature. On this plane, there are no successes, for the subject itself is beyond comprehension and no matter how lofty in content and beautiful an icon may be it cannot be perfect, just as no word image can be perfect. In this sense both theology and iconography are always a failure. Precisely in this failure lies the value of both alike; for this value results from the fact that both theology and iconography reach the limit of human possibilities and prove insufficient. Therefore the methods used by iconography for pointing to the Kingdom of God can only be figurative, symbolical, like the language of the parables in the Holy Scriptures. But the content expressed in this symbolical language is immutable, both in the Scriptures and in the liturgic image.

Just as the teaching concerning the purpose of Christian life—the deification of man—continues to exist, so the dogmatic teaching concerning the icon continues to exist and live in the Divine services of the Orthodox Church, thanks to which the right attitude to the icon is preserved. For an Orthodox man of our times an icon, whether ancient or modern, is not an object of aesthetic admiration or an object of study; it is living, grace-inspired art which feeds him. In our times, as of old, not only does the icon continue to be painted according to the Canon, but the consciousness of its content and significance is again awakening; for now, as before, it corresponds to a definite concrete reality, a definite living experience, which is at all times alive in the Church. For example, one of our contemporaries, a staretz of Mount Athos who died in 1938, describes his personal experience in the following words: "There is a great difference", he says, "between merely believing that God is, knowing Him from nature or from the Scriptures, and knowing the Lord by the Holy Spirit." "The Lord is known in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is in the whole of man—in his soul, his mind and his body." "He who has come to know the Lord by the Holy Spirit assumes the likeness of the Lord; as St. John the Evangelist said, 'We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is' (1 John iii, 2), and we shall behold his glory."[1] Thus as the living experience of the deification of man continues to exist, so, too, lives the iconographic Tradition, and with it even its technique; since as long as this experience is alive, its expression, whether in word or image, cannot disappear. In other words, being the outer expression of the likeness of God in man, the icon cannot disappear just as the likeness of man to God itself cannot disappear. The words of St. Simeon the New Theologian, spoken in the XIth century, apply here, as they apply to any period of the Church's history: "Those who say that now there are no men who could be... worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit... of being regenerated through the grace of the Holy Spirit and of becoming the sons of God with consciousness, practical experience and vision, overthrow the whole dispensation through Incarnation of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ and clearly deny the renewal of God's image or of human nature, corrupted and slain by sin."[2]

L. OUSPENSKY

[1] Archimandrite Sophrony, *Wisdom from Mount Athos: The Writings of Staretz Silouan 1866-1938*. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1975.

[2] Simeon the New Theologian, Discourse 64, p. 127. Moscow, 1892. In Russian.

THE TECHNIQUE OF ICONOGRAPHY

In speaking of the content and significance of the icon, we had in view the liturgic image independently of the medium of its execution, that is of whether the icon is painted, or carved in wood or stone, or executed in fresco or mosaic. However, the method which has the richest possibilities and corresponds best to the meaning and purpose of the icon, is classical painting with egg tempera. Its technique has behind it many centuries of tradition, going back to the most remote antiquity. This capital is carefully preserved, like the living tradition of icon-painting, and is handed down from generation to generation, going back to its source in Byzantium, and from thence apparently to the ancient world. Naturally new materials appear in the course of time, and are carefully studied and adapted to icon-painting. Yet the methods of this technique, elaborated by many centuries of practice, form a traditional system and are used by contemporary icon-painters almost without change.

The process of preparation of an icon possesses a complex character of its own and is divided into a series of operations, requiring great skill and experience. The traditional and most convenient material has always been a wooden panel, the selection of which is of tremendous importance both for the painting of the icon and for its preservation. The most suitable are panels made of non-resinous wood, such as lime, alder, birch (which bind best with the ground), cypress and so forth. Pine is also frequently used, but the least resinous kind. The panel chosen for an icon must be totally dry, without knots, and must be carefully planed. To protect it from the possibility of early warping and cracking, on the back are inserted, but not fixed, two horizontal struts made of some harder wood. A recessed space is usually made on the face of the panel, the margins of which serve as a frame for the icon. This natural frame has a practical significance, since it strengthens the resistance of the icon to warping, and also allows the hand to be rested against the wood without touching the paint during work. Moreover, it corresponds to the meaning of the icon: if the frame of a picture emphasises the impression of illusion, here the margins of the icon play an opposite role and hinder this impression of illusion. For the purpose of getting more solid cohesion with the ground, the surface of the panel is finely scored with some sharp instrument. This roughened surface is covered with liquid size and well dried, usually for twenty-four hours. Then a piece of loosely woven linen is glued on to it, which serves as an underlayer for the ground. This underlayer is very important, for it binds the ground more firmly to the panel, protects the panel from splitting, and when it begins to warp, prevents the ground from flaking off.

The next operation, the preparation and application of the ground (levkas) is complex and important. To prepare the ground one uses alabaster or the highest grade chalk and the best quality of size.[1] The panel is coated with several consecutive applications of this solution of glue and chalk, care being taken to make each coating as thin as possible. The number of applications should be between three and eight, depending on the consistency of the ground. Each coating is thoroughly dried and cleaned, that is the surplus of chalk is rubbed off and all dust is carefully removed. As a principle, the thinner each individual layer of ground, the better they are bound together. The ground or levkas must be hard, of a uniform consistency, evenly white and smooth throughout, free from cracks and matt in its final appearance.

When the panel has been thus prepared, the drawing of the proposed icon is made on it with a brush or a pencil. An experienced iconographer either draws it from his head, if the subject is well known to him, and guided by the meaning of the image, lays out the composition and the figures as he wills, or, if the theme is little known to him, he uses the help of other icons, iconographic manuals, preliminary sketches and so forth.[2] The drawing is then scratched onto the ground along the outlines and principal lines with some sharp tool, such as a needle—this is the so-called stylus. This method, adopted in iconography from frescos, is a great help in the work,

[1] Chalk ground is less lasting than alabaster, but it is cheaper and is more convenient for working. The simplest recipe, out of a great number used by modern icon-painters, is the following: 12 grams of gelatine are dissolved in 200 grams of hot water (in ancient times fish glue was used and the process of preparing the ground with it was different). This hot solution is used both for the first coating of the panel and the glueing of the linen. The same proportion of water and glue is used also for the ground. It should be noted that the first application is done with a stronger solution, namely, three slightly heaped table-spoons of chalk are slowly added to the afore-mentioned solution of glue and water, the solution is allowed to stand, the whole is thoroughly mixed and is thereupon applied to the panel with a brush. For further applications, the same solution is taken, but with the addition of 5 spoonfuls of chalk. This solution is used for the necessary number of applications, being warmed up each time in a double saucepan.

[2] Manuals may be not only ancient but also modern. For example the sketches reproduced in this book were done in our times in Paris as the personal material of an iconographer.

for it allows the original outlines to be preserved without being blurred by the paint during work. But of course it is not obligatory to follow this engraved line; for example, if the pattern of the design does not quite correspond to the colour effect required, the outline can be altered by the brush in the process of painting. When the outlines and principal lines have been thus engraved, the preliminary drawing is carefully rubbed out.

If some areas have to be covered with gold throughout, this should be done before the painting, for otherwise the gold would adhere to the paints. This refers, of course, only to whole areas, whether large or small, such as the background, haloes, and so forth.

Gold lines (done with liquid gold), such as are used for instance on the Saviour's garments and so forth—a method called "*assiste*"—are done later. Areas are usually covered with leaf gold, an exceedingly complicated and delicate process, requiring great experience and skill.

After gilding, careful drying and removal of surplus gold, the actual painting starts. For this, first of all take a fresh yolk, and free it from the white by shifting it from the palm of one hand to the other (if the white gets into the paint it will crack), pierce it and pour the contents into a glass. Then add an equal volume of water, mix well and, to protect the liquid from deterioration, add a little vinegar.[1] Then the resulting mixture is again stirred and used as a binding substance for pigments; it is kept in a well corked bottle.

The fundamental colours used in iconography are the "earths" (that is, mineral pigments) and natural organic colours. Artificial colours are only used as supplementaries. As in composition and drawing the artist is bound only by the meaning of the image, so in colours he is bound only by the fundamental symbolic colours of the garments of persons represented and of course by facts (for instance, dark or grey hair and so forth). He is completely free both as regards the combination of colours and their hues, and the colours of the landscape, architectural features and so forth. Thus the palette of each iconographer is entirely individual.

The pigments are used in the form of fine powders, dissolved in the prepared yolk and, for actual use, are diluted with water. The amount of egg introduced into the pigment varies. For example, white, ochre, blue and umber require a greater amount of egg than the others, and to get a correct proportion of egg and pigment depends entirely on the experience of the iconographer. In any case, when dry, the colour should be matt and stable. If there is too much yolk, the colour when dry will be glossy and will crack. If there is too little, it is easily rubbed off. When properly prepared these paints are a precious and very convenient material for painting. They are suitable both for brush-work and for the laying of washes and a combination of both methods may be varied indefinitely. They dry as rapidly as water colours, which allows of quick work, but they are not so easily washed off. Their durability increases with time, and their resistance to chemical decomposition under the influence of sunlight is much greater than with water colours or oil paints.

The painting of an icon proceeds by definite consecutive stages. At first the whole icon is covered, that is, all its areas are covered with fundamental local tones, with no half-tones or darks. On these fundamental tones, to preserve the graphic structural composition, the original drawing of the icon is re-traced, along the incised principal lines and outlines, with a darker tone of the same colour. Two methods are used for work on the "dolichnoye"[2], the figures, the landscape, etc. The first is to put in the darks with very liquid colours and to leave the lighter places untouched; the second—to use the basic tone for darks and to build up the lights in several layers of colour getting successively lighter, reducing the area of light with each subsequent layer and gradually shading it away in the direction of the dark. This work, and frequently the first covering, are done with liquid colours, applied in translucent layers called washes. This method is very varied and its application in one way or another depends on the art and skill of the individual painter. It requires great knowledge and experience, for the artist has to take into consideration all the positive and negative effects of one layer showing from under another, including the fundamental white background. The faces are done in the same consecutive manner, by several applications, always building up from the basic dark tone to the light. This fundamental principle of transition from dark to light goes back, through Byzantium, to Greek portraiture. Layers of paint, superimposed one upon another, create a barely perceptible relief, lower in the darks and higher in the lights. In this way the icon is not only painted, but also

[1] In winter less vinegar is used, in summer more; in either case, less than the volume of the yolk. In Italy they used, instead of vinegar, the juice of a fig-tree, in Germany beer, in Russia kvass.

[2] i.e. the whole surface except faces and other uncovered parts of the body.

as it were modelled, according to the traditional requirements of an icon's structure. When the lights have been put in, the outlines blurred by the washes are retraced and details are re-drawn. On highlight areas are put "enliveners", indicating the brightest touches of light upon the three-dimensional objects represented on the icon, the necessary inscriptions are made, and the completed icon is dried for several days.

After drying, the icon is covered with olipha. Olipha—boiled linseed oil—is prepared according to various recipes. As a rule, different kinds of resins are added to the boiling oil, in particular amber. The operation of covering the icon with olipha also requires great skill, since an unskilled application of it may easily ruin the icon. Olipha plays a double role: first, it protects the paint from the destructive influence of damp, light, air and so forth, secondly it has an effect on the colour. Permeating the paints, olipha gives them greater translucence and depth, unifies them and gives the icon a general warm golden hue. The painter usually takes into account this unifying action of olipha. On the other hand, however, the protective layer of olipha, left on the surface of the icon, easily absorbs dust and soot from the air, as a result of which the colours lose their brilliance and with time the icon becomes dark. Still, when the layer of olipha is removed the colours protected by it are revealed under it in their original richness and fullness of tone (see, for instance, the icon of St. Paraskeva the Martyr, p. 138, where a layer of olipha has been left in the bottom right-hand corner). Olipha is the best and safest means of preserving an icon, and no varnish can compare with it. By permeating the paint, it connects all the layers of colour and penetrates through to the ground, fixes them and with time transforms them into a uniform solid mass. If ancient icons have preserved to this day all their astonishing freshness and brilliance of colour, this is mainly due to olipha.

This, in brief general outline, is the process of creating an icon, a process which at least demands a sound knowledge of the constituent materials and skill in dealing with them and using them. There is no need to speak of the durability of the technique of iconography—the icon itself is proof of that. Unlike the contemporary artist, the iconographer, in ancient as in our own times, takes part in the creation of an icon right from the start (at least from the start of preparing the ground) to the end. Consequently, he knows the materials entering into his work and their qualities, and can always take into account both their merits and defects. It is worth noting that, despite the complications and difficulties of working with egg tempera, oil paints, when they appeared later, were not adopted for iconography until its decadence. In Russia, in particular, oil paints were not used in iconography till the XVIIIth century, and even then only partially. The reason for this evidently lies in the fact that, owing to their sensual character, oil paints are unfit to express the asceticism, spiritual richness and joy belonging to an icon.

A significant feature of the technique of iconography is the selection of basic materials which enter into it. In their totality, they represent the fullest participation of the visible world in the creation of an icon. As we have seen, this includes representatives, so to speak, of the vegetable, mineral and animal worlds. The most fundamental of these materials (water, chalk, pigments, egg ...) are taken in their natural form, merely purified and prepared, and by the work of his hands man brings them to serve God. In this sense the words of the Prophet David, spoken by him at the blessing of the materials for the building of the temple, "All things are thine, and of thine own have we given thee" (1 Chron. xxix, 14) are still more applicable to the icon where matter serves to express the image of God. But these words acquire their highest significance in the Liturgy at the offering of the Holy Gifts to be transformed into the very Body and Blood of Christ: "Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee, in all and for all." Thus matter too, offered in the icon as a gift to God by man, in its turn emphasises the liturgic meaning of the icon.

LEONID OUSPENSKY

THE MAIN TYPES OF ICONS

THE ICONOSTASIS

The iconostasis represents one of the most important architectural features of Orthodox churches. It is an unbroken screen, composed of icons, separating the Sanctuary, where the sacrament of the Eucharist is celebrated, from the central part, the nave, where the congregation stands. It consists of several rows of icons placed on horizontal wooden transoms, either close to one another, as, for instance, in the XVth century iconostases, or separated from one another by half-columns, the result being a great number of icons enclosed in separate, and often carved, gilt or painted frames.

It is well known that the original iconostasis in the form of a screen between the Sanctuary and the nave has existed in Christian churches from very ancient times. We find information about ancient screens in the writings of Church Fathers, for instance Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom, and in ancient historians, such as Eusebius. The form and height of these original screens varied. Sometimes they were solid low walls or balustrades, the height of a man's chest, on which one could lean with one's elbows, at other times they were higher latticed screens or a row of columns with an architrave. They were often made of particularly precious materials and decorated with sculpture or painted images. On the inner side, that is, on the side of the Sanctuary, was a curtain which was drawn open or closed in accordance with the various stages of the church service. In this way the Sanctuary screen made the Sanctuary both visible and at the same time inaccessible.

The Sanctuary screen began to grow more complex very early. Even in Byzantium icons of the months—according to the church calendar or menology—and icons of holy days began to be placed there. At first under the architrave, and later upon it, immediately over the Royal Door, was an icon of the Saviour, and later a triptych of the Saviour, the Holy Virgin and John the Baptist (composed either of one long wooden panel or of three separate icons), the so-called *Deisis*. This triptych of the Sanctuary screen, brought to Russia from Byzantium, is supposed to be the initial form, from which the Orthodox iconostasis gradually evolved on Russian soil. This evolution took the shape of adding to the above mentioned icons and of increasing the number of storeys or tiers. By the XIIIth and XIVth centuries Russia already possessed iconostases of many tiers; much later, in the XVIIth or XVIIIth centuries, this form spread from Russia to other Orthodox countries.

See reproduction on page 61, and illustration on page 62.

To understand the liturgic meaning and significance of the iconostasis, it is necessary to say a few words about the meaning of the symbolism of the church building itself, transmitted to us by the holy Fathers; this symbolism is the guiding factor in the construction of Orthodox churches and the arrangement of the images in them. In the first centuries it was expressed merely in the general idea of the church as a place sanctified by the presence of God, which, during the services, was filled with angels and contained men who were absolved and sanctified. This general idea of a church (more a matter of inner experience than of outer representation) began to unfold itself in ever greater detail from the IVth century. It was chiefly at this time that Christian church services began to acquire a definite form, whilst together with this, and in answer to ritual requirements, there began to evolve a definite plan and a definite arrangement and decoration of the various parts of the church.[1]

Eusebius already dwells in detail on this symbolism in his eulogy of Bishop Paulinus on the occasion of the building of a church in Tyre.[2] At the basis of this symbolism lies the teaching of the Church on the redeeming sacrifice of Christ and its ultimate aim, which constitutes the very essence of Christianity—the future transfiguration of man and, through him, of the whole world. In its entirety the church is the image of the future, renewed world, where God "filleth all in all" (Eph. i, 23). Saint John of Damascus says: "The law, and all that conforms to the law, was a shadow of the image of the things to come, that is, a shadow of the service we have, and the service we have is the image of the good things to come; but the things themselves (Heb. x, 1) (i.e. reality itself)—are the heavenly Jerusalem, made not of matter nor with hands, just as the divine Apostle himself says, 'For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come' (Heb. xiii, 14), which is the heavenly Jerusalem 'whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. xi, 10). For everything both conforming to the law

and conforming to our service, came into being for the sake of this (i.e. of the heavenly Jerusalem)."[3]

Opposite page: Iconostasis. Russian, XVIth century, Side chapel (Nativity of the Theotokos) in the St. Sophia Cathedral, Novgorod. Photo: I. Grabar

On the basis of this interpretation each part of the Christian church draws its meaning from its general position and function in the course of the divine service. According to the interpretation of Saint Maximus the Confessor and the holy Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem, the church is the image of the immaterial and of the sensory worlds—of the spiritual and the physical man. The Sanctuary is the symbol of the first, the nave—the symbol of the second. At the same time both these parts constitute an indivisible whole, in which the first enlightens and feeds the second, so that the latter becomes a sensory expression of the former. This correlation re-establishes the order of the universe violated by the transgression. This interpretation is further developed in detail in the explanations of the symbolism of the church and the liturgy by the holy Patriarch Germanus of Constantinople, the great confessor of Orthodoxy of the time of the iconoclast heresy, and by Saint Simeon, Metropolitan of Thessalonica. According to the first, "the church is the earthly heaven where God, Who is above heaven, dwells and abides, and it is more glorious than the tabernacle of witness. It is foreshadowed in the patriarchs, is based on the Apostles... it is foretold by the prophets, adorned by the hierarchs, sanctified by the martyrs, and its high Altar stands firmly founded on their holy remains..." As Saint Simeon of Thessalonica says, "it represents what is on earth, what is in heaven, and what is above the heavens." He explains more precisely: "The narthex corresponds to earth, the church to heaven, and the holy Sanctuary to what is above heaven."[4] All the paintings in the church are arranged in accordance with this symbolism. Thus it is not an arbitrary conglomeration of individual images, but a definite system corresponding to the part of the building where a particular image is placed.

In connection with these interpretations the Sanctuary screen also has a symbolic meaning. The holy Fathers liken it to the boundary between two worlds: the Divine and the human, the permanent and the transitory (as for instance Saint Gregory the Theologian in the *Ode to the Bishops*). Saint Simeon of Thessalonica gives the following explanation: "The columns on the iconostasis represent the firmament, dividing the spiritual from the sensory. Therefore the *κοσμίτης* (transom or horizontal beam) denotes the union through love between the heavenly and the earthly. This is why above the *kosmit*, in the centre between the holy icons, there are images of the Saviour and the Mother of God, which means that they abide both in heaven and among men."[5]

As we shall see further, this symbolism finds its clearest and fullest development in the iconostasis, which was later evolved from the Sanctuary screen. Although, on the one hand, it is a screen dividing the Divine world from the human world, the iconostasis at the same time unites the two worlds into one whole in an image which reflects a state of the universe where all separation is overcome, where there is achieved a reconciliation between God and the creature, and within the creature itself. Standing on the boundary line between the Divine and the human, it reveals by means of images as fully as possible the ways to this reconciliation.

The iconostasis reproduced here is a folding one, composed of fifteen sections, attributed to the middle of the XVIth century.[6] It is an example of the classical composition of an Orthodox iconostasis. Such iconostases were used for prayers in private houses and also, owing to their small size, especially when folded (height 22 inches, length 77 inches) could be taken on journeys or campaigns. The difference between it and church iconostases consists in the fact that it has no lower part consisting of local icons and of the three doors: the central, leading into the Sanctuary, the so-called Royal Door, the north door, leading to the Sacrificial Table, and the south one leading to the deaconry. The usual upper storey is also absent—that of the Forefathers—representing the initial Church of the Old Testament, from Adam to the law of Moses, in a series of Old Testament patriarchs presaging the Church of the New Testament.

See insert, page 64A. Portable Iconostasis, Russian, middle of XVIth century. 77 x 22 inches. Coll. Dr. John Sinsky

Below this, and making the upper row of our iconostasis, is the Prophets' storey. It consists of images of Old Testament prophets with open scrolls in their hands, on which are written



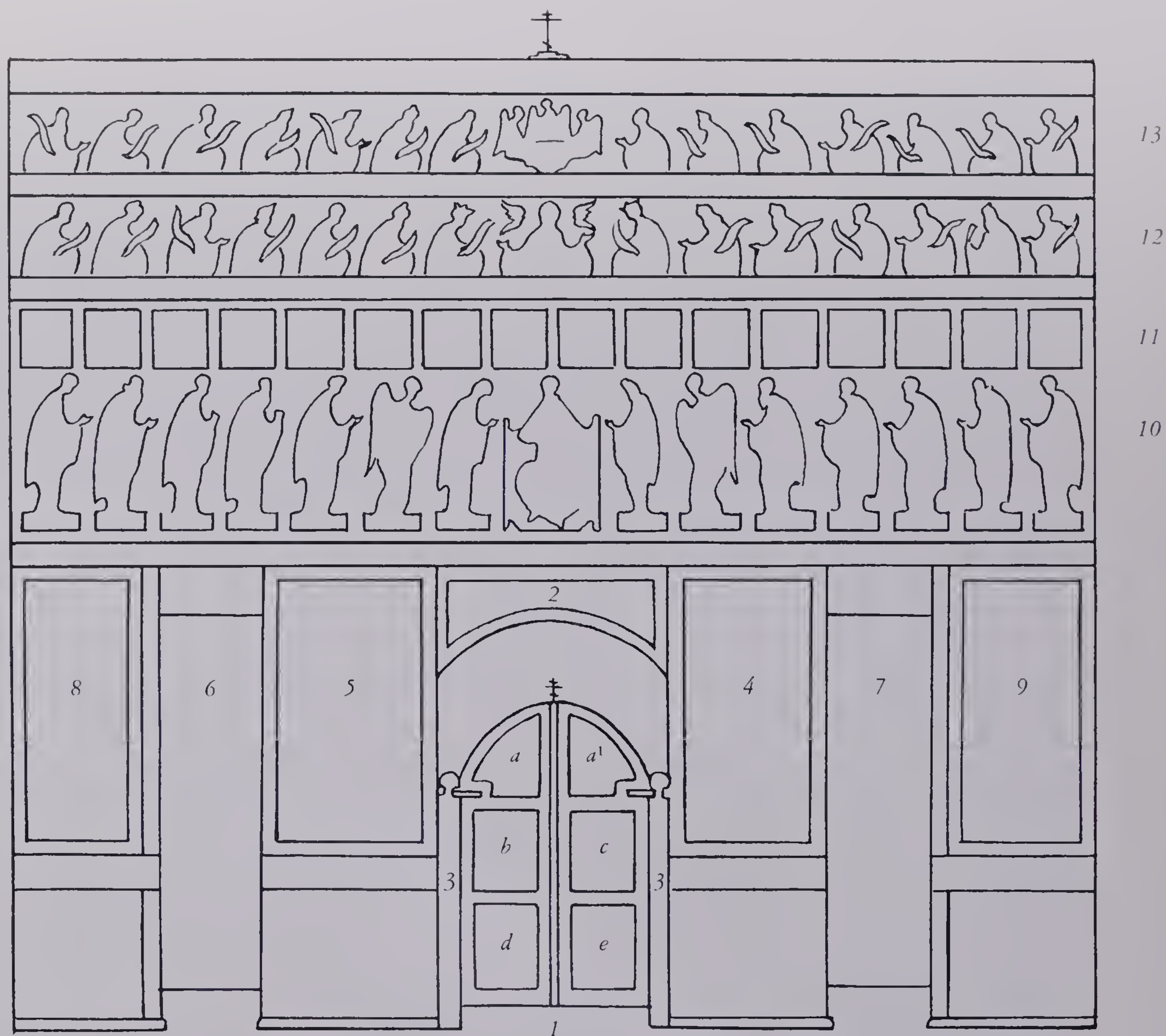


Diagram of a church iconostasis: 1. The Holy Door; a *and* a[1]*: Annunciation;* b, c, d *and* e*: The four Evangelists. 2. The Last Supper. 3. The jambs of the Holy Door with figures of the Holy Fathers the Liturgists. 4. Icon of Christ or icon of the event or the person to whom the church is dedicated. 5. Icon of the Mother of God. 6. and 7. The northern and the southern doors with images of the Archangels or of sainted deacons. 8. and 9. Other icons. 10.* Tchin. *11. Icons of the liturgical feasts. 12. The row of the Prophets. 13. The row of the Patriarchs.*

texts from their prophecies concerning the Divine Incarnation. This is why the centre of this row is occupied by the icon of Our Lady of the Sign[7] (see the analysis of this icon, p. 77)—the image of Divine Incarnation as the fulfilment of their prophecies. Unlike the lower storey of our iconostasis, where the difference in the movements of individual figures is only noticeable with careful study, here the prophets' postures are very varied. In spite of the general direction towards the centre, each figure has its own movement, its own gesture. Each prophesies in his own way, holding his scroll in his own manner. This row represents the Church of the Old Testament, from Moses to Christ, which was a "presage" (Patriarch Germanus) and a preparation for the Church of the New Testament. At the same time this row, together with the row of Forefathers, represents the Lord's carnal ancestors. In this way the icon of the Divine Incarnation in the centre indicates the direct connection between the Old and the New Testaments. The order of the prophets here is as follows: to the right of the icon of Our Lady of the Sign (that is to the left of the spectator)are the prophets David, Zacharias (father of John the Baptist), Moses, Samuel, Nahum, Daniel and Habakkuk; to the left of the centre (that is, to the right of the spectator) are the prophets Solomon, Ezekiel, Haggai, Elias, Malachi, Elisha and Zechariah.

The next storey of the iconostasis is that of "Holy Days". It consists of a series of pictures representing the events of the New Testament which are celebrated by the Church with particular solemnity, as the principal stages of the action of the Divine Providence in the world, that is, the growth of the revelation. This is the beginning of "the service we have", that is the fulfilment of what was foreshadowed and foretold in the upper rows. These holy days express the totality of the Church teaching; they are "the pearls of the divine dogmas", as Patriarch Germanus calls them. In church iconostases this row is usually composed of icons of the Resurrection of Christ and of the twelve principal holy days—six of the Lord: Nativity, Candlemas (Presentation), Epiphany (Baptism), Transfiguration, Entry into Jerusalem, Ascension—four of the Virgin: Her Birth, Presentation, Annunciation, Assumption—the Pentecost and the Elevation of the Cross, arranged according to the course of the Church year. Where there is free space, as in the iconostasis reproduced here, icons of other, less important holy days are added, as well as the icon of the Crucifixion. In our iconostasis the distribution of icons of holy days does not correspond to the Church cycle. It is as follows: (from left to right) Birth of the Virgin, Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, Annunciation, Baptism, Candlemas, Entry into Jerusalem, Women bearing spices at the tomb of Christ, Crucifixion, Descent into Hell, Raising of Lazarus, Nativity of Christ, Transfiguration, Ascension, Elevation of the Cross, Assumption, Pentecost. The meaning and content of the icons of these holy days are analysed elsewhere. See pages 145-215.

The next storey of the iconostasis is called "Tchin". It is a developed *Deisis*—the triptych of the ancient Sanctuary screen. The word *Deisis* (*Δέησις*) means prayer, in this case the standing in prayer, before the Saviour, of the Mother of God and of John the Baptist. The Mother of God is always on His right, according to the words of the psalm: "The queen stood by on thy right hand" (Ps. xliv, 9). The word "tchin" means order. This order came into being by adding to the Mother of God and John the Baptist, standing in prayer before Christ, members of various hosts of heavenly and earthly sainthood: angels, apostles, hierarchs and others.[8]

The order of their disposition in the iconostasis reproduced is as follows: on the side of the Holy Virgin is Archangel Michael, Apostle Peter, St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, St. Zossima, the great martyr George; on the side of St. John the Baptist—Archangel Gabriel, Apostle Paul, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Nicholas, St. Sabbatius, the great martyr Demetrius.

Arranged in a strict and orderly succession the saints depicted here are united in one common movement—their prayerful élan towards the Lord sitting on His throne. By this rhythmic movement they draw the spectator, as it were, into their solemn procession. The somewhat elongated proportions of their figures, full of deep concentration, give them a special

elegance and lightness. Their harmonious outlines form sharp silhouettes, leaning, as though moved by the wind, freely and easily towards the centre.

The Tchin expresses the result of the Divine Incarnation, the fulfilment of the Church of the New Testament. Consequently it is the central part of the Iconostasis. The individual images of saints represented here do not express their earthly service, although their clothes and attributes indicate it. What is represented here is the culmination of every type of service, of every separate path—a prayerful standing before the throne of God. The rhythmic external order of the figures is the expression of inner order. It is the image of attainment of the normal order of the universe, the order of the life to come, where "God" is "all in all" (1 Cor. xv, 28), the contemplation of Divine Glory. This thought is here emphasised by the image of the Saviour Himself. He is represented as sitting on His throne, with the attributes of Divine Glory, the *mandorla* intercrossed by rays coming from Him, surrounded by heavenly powers, with the Evangelists' symbols at the corners. The *mandorla* is placed between two squares which form an octagonal star, the symbol of the eighth day—the future life.[9] This iconography of the Saviour is none other than the unfolding of the prophetic vision of the Lord's glory. "The Lord reigns; he has clothed himself with honour: ... for he has established the world, which shall not be moved" (Ps. xcii, 1). Consequently this iconography has also other aspects: thus in the centre of the picture of the Last Judgment there is usually placed a *Deisis* with this particular iconography of Christ as the Judge come in glory. This thought of the Last Judgment is present also here, in the Tchin. In this aspect the whole Tchin in its entirety expresses the intercession by prayer of Christ's Church for the sins of the world. Moreover, this iconography represents the Saviour here, in the centre of the Tchin, both as the Head of the Church and as the Redeemer Who has sacrificed Himself for men's sins. This is why in our icon He holds the Gospels open at the text: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. xi, 28)—accepting all those who come to Him, since He is perfect love.[10]

The lower storey of a church iconostasis may have a local and occasional character. It is represented here by its central part, the Royal Door, on either side of which are placed two large icons, usually that of the Saviour and to the right of Him (to the left of the spectator) an icon of the Virgin and Child. Sometimes the icon of the Saviour is replaced by the icon of that particular church, that is, the icon of the holy day or the saint to which (or to whom) the church is dedicated. Further, on the north and south doors are depicted the two Archangels, Michael and Gabriel, or saintly deacons, as servitors in the celebration of the Mystery. If some room is left it is filled with other icons. This storey has still kept its ancient name of the Worship storey. It was so called because the icons of the current month, of the church calendar, or of a holy day, which were kept here on the Sanctuary screen, were taken off and placed on the pulpit for worship. Apparently this name was preserved because the icons for particular occasions were not placed very high and so were the object of a closer and more immediate communion and veneration. They are kissed, candles are burned before them, and so forth. It is to them that the words of Saint Simeon of Thessalonica can pre-eminently be referred, that they "abide both in heaven and among men". This storey lacks the strictly rhythmic arrangement of other storeys, and is often quite asymmetrical. The icons composing it are usually very varied and depend on local requirements and the character of a given church.

Opposite page (insert):
Portable Iconostasis Russian, middle of XVIth century, 77 x 22 inches. Coll. Dr. John Sinsky



















































THE HOLY OR ROYAL DOOR

See reproduction on page 65. Holy door, Russian, XVIth century. Photo: A La Vieille Russie, New York

The Royal Door apparently existed from the time of the first Sanctuary screens. It consists of a double door with a figured top, fixed on wooden uprights. According to the testimony of ecclesiastical writers, the Royal Door was decorated with icons from the most ancient times.[11] Their usual order of distribution, as on the door reproduced here, is as follows: the top is occupied by an Annunciation, with the Virgin on the leaf to the right of the spectator, Archangel Gabriel on the left. Below are the four Evangelists, two on each leaf: under Archangel Gabriel, Saint John and Saint Luke; under the Virgin, Saint Matthew and Saint Mark. On each side, on the jambs on which the leaves of the Royal Door are hinged, are placed images of the holy Fathers, the Liturgists.

The Royal Door is the entrance into the Holy of Holies—the Sanctuary; only the clergy may enter through it, and only at definite moments, as the church service requires. In accordance with the symbolism of the Sanctuary, it represents the entrance into the Kingdom of God. This is why the announcers of this Kingdom are represented on it—the Evangelists and, above them, the Annunciation, as the personification of the tidings they proclaim.

Immediately above the Royal Door, on a shield inserted into the place cut out for the top of the door, is placed the image of the Last Supper—Christ giving communion to the Apostles. This image represents the liturgic interpretation of the image of the Last Supper which, taken as an historical episode from the life of the Saviour and the moment of the establishment of the sacrament of the Eucharist, is usually placed in the "holy days" storey of the iconostasis, if there is room.[12] The subject of the Apostles' communion emphasises and singles out the sacerdotal office of Christ, which is here expressed in His direct action as Priest. The characteristic feature of this image is that in it essentially the same composition is repeated twice (see page 65); in this way it depicts the two elements of communion which are obligatory in the Orthodox Church. On one side six Apostles are about to partake of bread, in accordance with the words of the Lord: "Take, eat; this is my body" (p. 66). On the other side (p. 67) the other six approach the cup, according to the words: "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of



the new testament" (Matt. xxvi, 26-28). This sacrament, represented immediately above the place where the communion of the faithful takes place, continues, administered by the successors of the Apostles to the members of the Church, uniting them to one another and, by lifting them up to Christ, making them participants of His flesh and His Divinity, as Saint John of Damascus says.[13]

Such are, in brief and general outline, the meaning and content of the different storeys of a classical Orthodox iconostasis. At the basis of its evolution (the growth and distribution of icons) lies the absolute necessity to understand Christian dogma. This is why the role played by the Sanctuary screen was not only preserved but has acquired a significance it did not have before. Separating the Sanctuary from the nave (the Divine from the human) the iconostasis, just as did the ancient screen, points to their hierarchic difference, the importance and significance of the sacrament, which takes place in the Sanctuary. At the same time it indicates, like the ancient screen, the connection between the two worlds, heaven and earth, and it reveals this connection pictorially, showing in a concise form, on one plane, immediately before the eyes of the congregation, the ways of reconciliation between God and man, the purpose and consequences of the redeeming sacrifice of Christ, the descent of God and the ascent of man. In different storeys in a harmonious order and strict sequence are shown the stages of the Divine Dispensation. From God to man, from above downwards there goes the ray of Divine revelation: gradually, through the preparation of the Old Testament, through things foreshadowed in the patriarchs and foretold by the prophets, towards the series of holy days, the fulfilment of what the Old Testament was preparing for, and through this storey towards the coming completion of the Dispensation, the image of the Kingdom of God—the Tchin. Below this there takes place the direct communion between God and man. These are the ways of the ascent of man. They proceed from below upwards. Through receiving the preaching of the Gospels and communion by prayer, through the union of the will of man with the will of God (in this aspect the icon of the Annunciation represents the iconography of

Reproductions on pages 66-67:
The Eucharist,
ca. 1500.
9 x 12 inches (each).
Photo: Temple Gallery, London

the harmonious union of the two wills)[14], and finally, through communion in the sacrament of the Eucharist man accomplishes his ascent to the Tchin, that is, enters the oecumenical union of the Church, becomes "of the same body" with Christ (Eph. iii, 6). The external symbol of this union in the church service is, among other things, the symbolic gesture of censing. The priest or the deacon swings the censer first before the icons and then before the congregation, thus paying homage to the image of God in man and uniting in one gesture the saints represented in the icons and the congregation—the heavenly and the earthly Church.

The expansion of the iconostasis, which ended in the XVIth century, took place in Russia pre-eminently in the period of the highest blossoming of her sanctity and of her icon-painting in the XIVth and XVth centuries. Therefore the depth of penetration into the meaning and significance of the image, so characteristic of this period, was reflected in the form and the contents of the classical iconostasis. Drawing a parallel between sanctity and icon-painting one can say that it is the external expression and culmination of the highest period of Russian sanctity.

The iconostasis reproduced here, representing one of the best portable iconostases known to us, is yet insufficient for forming an idea of the classical church iconostasis, in spite of all explanations and descriptions. It must be remembered that dimensions play a very great part. All the same, if we magnify the figures of the Tchin to three metres, and imagine all the rest in proportion, we may be able to form an idea, for example, of the impressive ensemble in the creation of which Saint Andrew (Rublev) took part in 1408 in Vladimir.

[1] V. Yakovlev, the periodical *Faith and the Church* 1904. "The meaning of the symbolism attributed by the holy Fathers and Church teachers to a Christian church and its component parts."

[2] *History of the Church*, vol. 10, c. 4.; P.G. 20, coll. 879–880.

[3] *Second Discourse in Defence of Holy Icons*, c. 23.; P.G. 94, col. 1309C.

[4] *Book on the House of God*, c. 12. This symbolism goes back to apostolic interpretations of the church and the temple of God and represents a further development and unfolding of it by the holy Fathers. Thus Apostle Paul says: "Your bodies are the members of Christ" (1 Cor. vi, 15); the church is the body of Christ (Eph. i, 23) (see also 1 Cor. vi, 19; Col. i, 18)... The Apostle Peter likens this church to a house made with human hands, saying, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter ii, 5). This points directly to the view of the house made with hands as an image of the Church not made with hands.

[5] V. Yakovlev, op. cit.

[6] P. Muratov, *Thirty-five Russian Primitives*, Paris, 1931, p. 71.

[7] Cf. Isaiah, vii, 11–14.

[8] Icons including many figures existed even in Byzantium. Thus in the eulogy written by the Holy Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem to St. Cyrus and St. John (written in the second half of the VIIth century and quoted in the VIIth Oecumenical Council) we read: "We saw a great and marvellous icon where in the centre were represented in colours Christ and His Mother, our Lady the Virgin Mary to the left; to the right was John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Saviour... Here also were represented some of the glorious company of Apostles and prophets and some of the host of martyrs. Among them were these particular martyrs, Cyrus and John." The purpose of such icons and where they were placed we do not know.

[9] See the explanation of Easter icons, p. 192.

[10] The Gospel text is usually chosen in accordance with the need of those for whom it is destined and corresponding to the aspect of the Saviour's iconography which should be emphasised in the given circumstances.

[11] E. Philimonov, *Questions regarding the initial form of the iconostasis in Russian churches*. Moscow, 1859.

[12] The iconography of these images is known since the VIth century (cf. the Rossano Gospels of Alexandrian origin and the discos found near Antioch in 1911). They replaced the images of the sacrifice of Abraham, of Abel and of other prototypes of the New Testament sacrifice and the still more ancient images of the fish, of loaves, etc.

[13] *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, Book IV, c. 13, "On the pure and holy sacraments of the Lord". P.G. 94, col. 1144.

[14] See the analysis of the icon of the Annunciation, p. 172.

ICONS OF CHRIST

"The Word of the Father, transcending all determination (ἀπερίγραπτος), determined Itself (περιεγράφη) in Its incarnation through Thee, Bearer of God. He made the defiled image as of old, and penetrated it with Divine Beauty."

This Kontakion, sung at the feast of Orthodoxy (the first Sunday of Lent), when the Church celebrates the victory of the holy images, and also the final triumph of the dogma of the Incarnation, contains implicitly the whole doctrine of what is the "Image" par excellence. "Image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature" (Col. i, 15), the hypostasis of the Logos is a "short and clear declaration of the nature of the Father."[1] Man, created in the image and likeness of God, had then the Divine Word for Archetype.[2] That is why the Incarnation of the Son renews the image which had lost its likeness through the sin of man[3]: it is not only a perfect theophany, but also the realisation of the perfect Man, to which the first Adam was unable to attain. The icon of the Christ, God-Man, is a graphic expression of the dogma of Chalcedon, for it represents the Divine Person incarnated, the Son of God become the Son of Man, "consubstantial with the Father" by His Divinity, "consubstantial with us" by His humanity.

If Christ, the "last Adam" (1 Cor. xv, 45), showed Himself as the Archetype of the "first man", on the other hand, in His redemptive economy, He took on the likeness of fallen human nature, which is an "unlikeness" belonging to the aspect of the "Servant", of the "Man of sorrows" (Is. liii, 3). Thus, whilst yet being the "true Image", Christ united the two aspects during His terrestrial life: that of the glorious likeness and that of the kenotic unlikeness—"form of God" and "form of a servant" (Phil. ii, 6–7), the former being dissimulated by the latter for outward eyes. Even the nearest disciples were to see Christ only once, before His Passion, in the glorious aspect of His deified humanity, on Mount Tabor.

The Church, which sees Christ with the eyes of imperturbable faith, will always show, in its liturgical hymns and on its icons, the God-Man preserving His majesty even in humiliation.

[1] St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. XXX, sec. 20.; P.G. 36, col. 129A.

[2] St. Athanasius, *Against the Pagans*, 1, 2.; P.G. 25, coll. 5C-8A.

[3] St. Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 14.; P.G. 25, col. 120CD. Eng. Trans. St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1977.

THE SAVIOUR ACHEIROPOIETOS

The icon "made without hands" (ἀχειροποίητος) or "the icon of the Lord on the cloth" (μανδήλιον), known in the West under the name of the "Holy Visage", occupies the central place among the images of Christ. The expression "acheiropoietos" receives its true meaning in the scriptural context (Mark xiv, 58): the image "made without hands" is above all the incarnate Word, which "shewed" Itself in "the temple of his body" (John ii, 21). From that time the mosaic law which forbade images (Ex. xx, 4) had no more meaning and the icons of Christ become irrefragable witnesses of the Incarnation of God. Instead of creating according to their own inclination, "with their hands", the image of the God-Man, iconographers must follow a tradition which attaches them to the original "acheiropoietos". This tradition acquired, at the start of the Vth century, a legendary form in the story of Abgar, king of Edessa, who was said to have had a portrait of Christ painted. According to the Byzantine version, the Edessa image would be an impression of the face of the Saviour on a piece of linen, which Christ had pressed to His face and sent to the envoy of Abgar.[1] Thus, the first images of Christ, the "mandilion" and its two miraculous reimpressions on bricks—the "keramidia"—would have been documents "made without hands", direct and, so to speak, material testimonies of the Incarnation of the Word. These legendary stories express


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in their way a dogmatic truth: Christian iconography—and above all the possibility of representing Christ—has its foundation in the fact of the Incarnation. In consequence, the sacred art of icons cannot be an arbitrary creation of artists: just as the theologian expresses by means of thought, so must the iconographer express by his art the living Truth, "made without hands", the Revelation that the Church possesses in her Tradition. Better than any other sacred image, the *acheiropoietos* icon of Christ expresses the dogmatic principle of iconography. That is why the VIIth Council (787) gave it special attention[2], and, to commemorate the definitive triumph of the holy images, it is this icon of Christ that is venerated at the feast of Orthodoxy (see the Kontakion above).

The iconographic type of the Saviour *acheiropoietos* shows us only the face of Christ, with neither neck nor shoulders, framed in long hair, which falls in locks on either side. The beard is sometimes single, ending in a point, sometimes forked. The regular features of the visage are rendered schematically: the beautiful line of the mouth has nothing of the carnal; the elongated and very straight nose forms, with the arched eyebrows, a pattern that recalls a palmtree. The grave and impassive expression of this visage of the God-Man has nothing in common with the impassiveness of indifference towards the human world that one finds so often expressed in effigies created by the religious art of the Far East. Here, it is the impassivity of an absolutely pure human nature, which excludes sin, but remains open to all the sorrows of the fallen world. The large dilated eyes, turned towards the onlooker, have an attentive and saddened look which seems to penetrate to the depths of consciences, without overwhelming them: Christ is come into the world not to condemn, but to save it (John iii, 17). In the nimbus that surrounds the head of Christ is inscribed the sign of the Cross. This cruciferous nimbus will be found on all the representations of Christ. The Greek letters on the three branches of the Cross form the Divine Name revealed to Moses: *ὁ ὤν*—THE BEING—(Exod. iii, 14), the redoubtable Name of Jehovah, belonging to the Divine nature of Christ. The abridged name of Jesus Christ—IC XC (above, on our icon) designates the hypostasis of the incarnate Son. It is obligatory for inscriptions of the Name to appear on all icons of Christ, of the Mother of God (*μρ θυ*) and of all the saints.

Icons of the Saviour *acheiropoietos* must already have been numerous at Byzantium from the beginning of the VIth century; and they became so above all after the translation of the Edessa icon to Constantinople (in 944). Nevertheless, the best icons of this type that we possess to-day are due to Russian iconographic art. One of the most ancient is the icon of the Cathedral of the Dormition at Moscow (XIIth century), painted in the monumental manner which recalls that of frescoes.[3]

Our icon, painted on a banner, is the work of a Russian iconographer, carried out in Paris about 1945. The modern technique, the artistic sense of a painter of our times, have here served to express what is not made with the hands of man: the traditional aspect of Christ, such as the Church knows Him.

See reproduction on page 70: "The Holy Face." 8 x 9½ inches. Holy Trinity Church, Vanves (Paris) Russian XXth century

[1] See the Byzantine account of the image of Edessa, falsely attributed to Constantine Porphyrogenetes: P.G. 113, coll. 428–454. Cf. the western legend of St.Veronica.

[2] Mansi, Coll. concil. XIII, coll. 189–192.

[3] For example, the fresco of the Saviour *Acheiropoietos* at Nereditsy, of the same epoch. On icons of this type, see N. A. Grabar, *The Saviour Acheiropoietos of the Cathedral of Laon*, Zographika, 3 (Seminarium Kondakovianum), Prague, 1930.

THE PANTOCRATOR

The iconographic type of the Christ-Pantocrator (*Παντοκράτωρ*, Ruler of all) expresses under the human features of the Incarnate Son, the Divine Majesty of the Creator and Redeemer, Who presides over the destinies of the world. The Pantocrator is seated on the throne, blessing with His right hand and holding in His left hand a scroll or a book. It is thus that He appears, for example, in the compositions of the "Deisis", where Our Lady and St. John the Baptist stand on either side of the throne.[1] But, whether He is represented alone or surrounded by saints, the type of the Christ-Pantocrator can always be reduced to a half-length image, in which the throne does not appear (except in icons of the Last Judgment, which always show the Pantocrator full length, seated on the throne of glory). The gigantic images of the Pantocrator, represented half-length, on the mosaics and frescoes of Byzantine cupolas, have a monumental style, which underlines the formidable aspect of the Lord, the Ruler of the Universe, Who will come to judge the quick and the dead. However, on icons exposed to the veneration of the faithful, the type of the Christ-Pantocrator, while still keeping the same majesty, lacks all fearfulness. The grave expression of His face is full of sweetness; it is the compassionate Lord, come to take on Himself the sins of the world. The book in His left hand is open at words of the Gospel, which may vary with different icons.

The large icon reproduced on p. 71, attributed to the end of the XVth century, depicts the Saviour as the King of Glory, surrounded by the heavenly powers.

See reproduction on page 71.
Christ Pantocrator, Russian, attributed to XVth century. 31 x 40 inches. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Sitting on a magnificent carved throne the Saviour blesses with the right hand, while with the left He supports the open Gospels resting on His knee with the composite text: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment. For with what judgment..." (John vii, 24; Matt. vii, 2). He is surrounded by an oval mandorla and by two curved squares forming an octagonal star—the symbol of the future aeon. (A star of this shape, but without the symbols of the Evangelists, is also met with in images of the Transfiguration, for instance in the paintings in Kovalevo church near Novgorod, 1380, and in a Greek illuminated manuscript in the National Library in Paris, 1242, folio 92; it is found, too, in the XIVth century.) Here the first square embraces only the beautifully placed, majestic figure of the Pantocrator. This square is enclosed in the mandorla which contains cherubim as representatives of the world of angels, surrounding the throne of God. In the corners of the second square, traced beyond the mandorla, are placed the symbols of the Evangelists who proclaimed the Gospel to the four ends of the world. On the left of the spectator, above, is the symbol of the Evangelist Matthew—a man; below is the symbol of the Evangelist Mark—a lion. On the right is an eagle—symbol of John and a bull—symbol of Luke (Rev.. iv, 6–8).

The Creator, "borne on cherubims", is depicted as having a strong but calm movement and His movement is as it were transmitted to the created world, finding its reflection in the quivering wings of the cherubims, in the variety of their postures and in the movement of the beasts towards the corners of the second square.

On the second icon here reproduced (Russian, XVIth century) Christ is clothed in a dark blue himation, but His tunic is represented as a glorious vestment, for it is woven of gold ("assiste").[2] The abundant hair falls in locks on the left shoulder of Christ. The right hand, folded in the gesture of benediction, inclines towards the Gospel, which Christ offers to the faithful. It is open at the passage from St. Matthew (xi, 28, 30): "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest... For my yoke is easy." The inscription and the cross of the nimbus are effaced.

See reproduction on page 74.
Christ Pantocrator, Russian, XVIth century. 45 x 37 cm. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

The third icon of the Pantocrator type, reproduced here, is covered with a frame of enamel, which follows the contours of Christ, represented half-length. He is making the gesture of benediction and holds the Gospel open at the same words that we noted on the preceding icon. Here the representation of Christ is simplified, treated with less finish. The tunic is not woven of gold and, in general, the appearance of the Saviour is less majestic: the iconographer has sought to express above all the compassion and sweetness of the Lord, accessible to the prayers of man.



This icon was executed in a Russian workshop, in the second half of the XIXth century. Despite its belonging to a period of decadence, our icon remains faithful to the iconographic canon, as well in the conception of the Christ-Pantocrator as in the technique.



Christ Pantocrator, Russian, XIXth century.

[1] See "The Iconostasis", p. 64 above.

[2] "assiste" is a technical expression, explained in "The Technique of Iconography", p. 54 above.

The Church has devoted to the Mother of God a cult of "hyperdulia", exalting Her above all the saints and all the celestial hierarchies. The place of the chosen Virgin is central in the history of salvation. In fact, the Divine Providence, being conformable with the freedom of creatures, could not culminate in the Incarnation of the Son of God before the Holy Virgin had consented that "the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations" (Col. i, 26) should be realised in Her, rendering Her the Mother of God. That is why Saint John Damascene said that: "the name of *Θεοτόκος* contains the whole history of the Divine economy in the world".[1] The *Mariologic* dogma is implied in Christology: one cannot deny to the Holy Virgin the quality of the Mother of God, as Nestorius wished, without injury to the dogma of the Incarnation of the Divine Hypostasis of Her Son. It is not the human nature of Christ taken in isolation, but the very Person of the Son of God, Who was born, according to His humanity, of the Virgin Mary—a creature rendered apt by the Holy Spirit to receive in Her womb the Word of the Father come into the world.

The name of the Mother of God expresses a unique relationship vis-à-vis the Second Person of the Trinity, relationship of motherhood to which a human person found herself assigned by Divine election. This pre-eminent place in the economy of salvation, this unique role in the Incarnation did not remain simply an instrumental function. "Mary the mother of Jesus" (Acts i, 14) made actual the unique relationship, which linked Her to Her Son, by manifesting it in Her personal sanctity. But this sanctity can be no other than the "total-sanctity", the plenitude of the grace conferred on the Church—the complement of the glorious humanity of Christ. But whilst the Church still awaits the advent of the world to come, the Mother of God has crossed the threshold of the eternal Kingdom; and, as the sole human person deified—token of the final deification of creatures—She presides, at Her Son's side, over the destinies of the world which yet unfold in time.

The glorification, which belongs to the Mother of God, cannot be compared with the cult rendered to the saints or to the angels. The multiple aspects of Her glory, which surpass all that one can imagine here below, have given rise to a multitude of icons, of which we reproduce here some of the principal types.

[1] *Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, III, c. 12.; P.G. 94, coll. 1023 and 1032.

OUR LADY
OF THE SIGN

See reproduction on page 78. Russian, late XVIth century. 9½ x 11½ inches. Private coll.

The icon of the Sign is among the most revered icons of the Mother of God. This image with characteristically upraised hands belongs to the type of the Mother of God Orans, but with Christ on Her breast. The gesture of prayer, the upraised hands characteristic of the Orans, is not specifically Christian. It was known both in the Old Testament and in the ancient Greco-Roman world. It was especially wide-spread in early Christian times, not however as a simple gesture of prayer but as a personification of prayer in the image of the Orans. Such images are seen in frescoes in the catacombs and on the bottoms of sacred vessels found there. The latter frequently have an image of the Mother of God in the posture of prayer, with the inscription "Maria" or "Mara" (the ancient Eastern form of that name) which belong to the beginning of the IVth century. The earliest known image of the Mother of God Orans with the Saviour Emmanuel on Her breast—our Sign—also belongs to the IVth century. This image, with two monograms of Christ at the sides, is in the Roman catacomb of "Cimitero Majore".[1]

Equally with the solemn image of the Mother of God Orans (without Christ), this image of the Sign is used in Orthodox churches as the altar-piece, as an iconographic revealing of the Church personified by the Mother of God, Who had confined within Herself the unconfinable God.

Images of the Sign are of two kinds: in some icons Christ is depicted in a mandorla[2], in others, as in the fresco of Cimitero Majore, without it, just as in some icons the Mother of God is depicted half-length, while in others full-length (for instance, the Yaroslavl Virgin Orans of the XIIth–XIIIth century in the Tretiakov Gallery). In the background, on either side of the Mother of God, fiery seraphims are sometimes painted or other angels, which emphasise Her significance (as in the icon reproduced here) as being above the angels "more honourable than the cherubims and incomparably more glorious than the seraphims".

On iconostases of Orthodox churches expressing the dogmatic teaching of the Church, the icon of the Sign, as we have seen, is usually placed in the centre of the Prophets' storey—the so-called Mother of God order ("tchin"), that is, as the central icon of the Old Testament Church awaiting redemption. As is known, the Old Testament prophecies of the Divine Incarnation culminate not in an allegorical utterance (such as are the prophecies of Solomon, Moses, Jacob and others) but in the clear and distinct prophecy of Isaiah, who for the clarity and exactness of his prophecies is called "the fifth Evangelist". "Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Emmanuel" (Isaiah vii, 14). The image of the Mother of God with the Child Emmanuel in Her bosom is this very Sign announced by the prophet and revealed to the world in its consummation. It is from this that the icon derives its name. The Sign is the image of the Divine Incarnation, of the revelation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, the manifestation of the Son of God through His human nature received from the Mother of God. Like Isaiah's prophecy itself, the icon of the Sign is a manifestation of prophetic predictions of the Divine Incarnation. This is evidently why on some iconostases (see Plate 1) the prophet Isaiah himself is absent. This is not an omission, but shows a specially deep understanding of the meaning and content of the icon of the Sign: so long as the Sign given by the Lord is present, the image of the prophet with his prediction is a superfluous repetition.

One can say that as, according to the words of St. Basil the Great, "the word of truth... in the economy of the Spirit... is so brief and concise that little means much"[3] so also the icon of the Sign in its majestic simplicity is in its content one of the most deep and complex icons of the Mother of God. Our icon has a peculiarity rare among icons of the Sign: not only is Emmanuel depicted here in a mandorla, but so also is the Mother of God. In other words, side by side with the revelation of the Divine glory of the Saviour Emmanuel, the glory of His Mother is revealed here too. For since His human nature is inseparable from His Mother, so the glory of the Mother is inseparable from the glory of the Divine Child. Yet the mandorla of the Mother of God differs from that of the Saviour both in colour and in the absence of





gold work. Bluish-green, with pink round the edge passing into red, it seems to be a visual expression of the words of the akathiston to the Mother of God, in which She is sung as "the fiery chariot of the Word"... "The brightest morning... bearing the sun-Christ", and so forth. The symbolism of the combination of those colours evidently corresponds to the darkness of the night of sin and ignorance and the dawn of the coming day of the restitution of the world. This emphasises the cosmic significance of the Mother of God and Her role in the restitution, for She has "renewed the whole world in Her womb".

Irmos of Ode 5
Irmos of Ode 3

Irmos of Ode 8
of the Sunday canon
of Tone I

The cold tone of the frame covering the margin of the icon, made of beaten silver, and the engraved haloes enhance the general warm tone of the icon and, beautifully blending with the colours, give it a solemn and festive look.

[1] According to N. P. Kondakov (*Iconography of the Mother of God*, vol. 1) this fresco seems to be a copy of a more ancient Eastern icon of the Mother of God. Another very early image of the Sign was found on an ampulla brought in the Vth century from the East and now to be found in a museum at Bologna (reproduced by Kondakov, ibid.).

[2] The mandorla or the nimbus is one of the clearest and most majestic attributes of Christ. It is an iconographic symbol in the shape of a circle or an oval signifying heaven, Divine Glory, Light. A mandorla consists of several, usually three, concentric circles, most often of different shades of blue, pierced by the rays of light issuing from Christ. A mandorla is the attribute of the glorified body of Christ in images depicting Him beyond the earthly plane of being (the same can be said about His garments worked with gold). As an attribute of the Saviour Emmanuel it emphasises the thought of the pre-eternal Child. The mandorla is used too for the Mother of God and also in those cases when it has to represent Her glory beyond the earthly plane.

[3] Works of our holy Father Basil the Great, part IV, Moscow, 1892, Discourse 3.

THE HODIGITRIA

The iconographic type of the Mother of God, known under the name of "Hodigitria" (*ἡ Ὁδηγήτρια*) has had a series of prototypes, which connect it with a venerable antiquity. Byzantine tradition traces it back to an original painting by Saint Luke. According to this story, it is related that the Mother of God blessed Her portrait saying: "My blessing will remain always with this icon", that Saint Luke sent the portrait of the Mother of God to Antioch, to the "most excellent Theophilus" with the text of his Gospel, and that towards the middle of the Vth century this image was transferred to Constantinople, by the care of the Empress Eudoxia, as a present to her mother-in-law Pulcheria.[1] This history was generally admitted at Byzantium towards the IXth century when the name "Hodigitria" appeared for the first time on seals. It is not known whether this name comes from the church "of the Commanders" (*τῶν Ὁδηγῶν*), in which the emperors were accustomed to pray when they left the capital at the head of an army, or whether the icon of the Mother of God as "Guide" would have given its name to the church reconstructed by Michael III (842–867). In any case, at this epoch, there was already attributed to the miraculous icon, which was transferred to Blachernae, a particular role in the destinies of the Christian Empire. This conception contributed to the forming of the iconographic type, Byzantine par excellence, which was going to be definitely elaborated in the IXth century and to receive the name of Hodigitria.[2]

The Syrian prototypes of the Hodigitria, already numerous in the VIth century, show us the Mother of God upright, holding the Infant in swaddling clothes half lying on Her left arm. These images were to be transformed by the Byzantine conception. On the icons of the Hodigitria created at Byzantium, the Christ-Child always appears seated, erect, on His Mother's left arm. The Infant is no longer a suckling: He is the type of the Christ-Emmanuel, the Infant "pre-eternal God", full of wisdom despite His tender years. Clothed in a glorious himation, woven of gold, the Christ-Emmanuel has in His left hand a scroll, whilst with His right hand He blesses, turning full face and looking straight before Him. The Mother of God, upright, straight and majestic, has no expression of intimacy towards Her Son: She looks at the spectator, or rather Her look is directed to the side, above the head of the Emmanuel. The right hand of the Hodigitria, raised towards the chest, could be expressing a gesture of prayer; but rather—it is a gesture of presentation: the Theotokos shows to men the Son of God Who, by Her, has come into the world. Or again—it is the attitude of the Sovereign Who presents to Her Son the people of the faithful, to which the Christ-Emmanuel responds with a broad majestic gesture of benediction.

See reproduction on page 79. *Hodigitria. Byzantine, Macedonian school, ca. first half XIVth century. 36 x 22 inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London*

The icon of the Hodigitria, created at Byzantium, calls to mind the ritual order of the imperial palace, which transformed the life of the "porphyrogenetic" monarchs into a series of official ceremonies, dissimulating all expression of personal feelings, so as to allow only the sacred character of the imperial dignity to appear. But at the same time this majestic detachment, alien to every manifestation of human affection, belonged most of all to a dogmatic icon of the divine Maternity—that of the Theotokos with the Christ-Emmanuel.

The type of the Hodigitria has given rise to iconographic variants which, having once been consecrated by the appearance of a miraculous icon, were reproduced under a new title. We publish here three icons of the Mother of God as "Hodigitria", venerated in Russia. They are reproductions of the miraculous icons of Smolensk, Tichvine and Kazan.

[1] According to a passage of the First Book of the Compilation of History by Theodore the Reader (about 530), a passage which seems to be a later interpolation. See Dobschütz, op. cit. I, pp. 269*, 186*, 188*.

[2] N. P. Kondakov, *The Iconography of the Mother of God*, St.Petersburg, 1914, vols. I passim and II, 152–293.

THE SMOLENSK MOTHER OF GOD

The "Hodigitria" of Smolensk (celebrated on July 28th) may have been brought to Russia by Anne of Greece, wife of Saint Vladimir, or, according to another tradition, by a Byzantine Princess of the same name, who married Vsevolod of Tchernigov in 1046. Vladimir Monomach is said to have placed this icon in the Cathedral of Smolensk in 1101. None of the reproductions, among which several have been venerated as miraculous icons, is earlier than the XIVth century, according to N. Kondakov.[1]

The Smolensk Mother of God is the Russian icon that most closely resembles the classical type of the Byzantine Hodigitria: the same stately attitude of the Theotokos and of the Infant-Emmanuel, the same solemn gestures that we noticed above. The icon reproduced here is a beautiful work of the XVIth century (108 x 82 cm). The fine head of the Mother of God, carried on an elongated and graceful neck, is covered with the *maphorion* decorated with three stars: above the forehead and on the two shoulders. This symbol of perpetual virginity (*ἀειπαρθενεία*)—before, during and after confinement—should figure on all icons

See reproduction on page 82. *The Smolensk Mother of God, Russian, XVIth century. 108 x 82 cm. Photo: Castle De Wijenburgh, Echteld, Netherlands*




МР ѲУ
ІС ХС



Hodigitria. Design for an icon

of the Mother of God. It is a decorative development of the three crosses which habitually decorated the maphorion of the Virgin on more ancient icons. The himation of the Emmanuel covers His body entirely and is woven of gold. The Mother of God, painted half-length, must remain standing for Her Son is not on Her knees; She holds Him aloft and upright on the left arm, in a ceremonial attitude, as in the Byzantine icons of the Hodigitria. The Archangels in the top corners are Michael (right of the Mother of God) and Gabriel (left of Her).

[1] Op. cit. vol. II, pp. 201–203.

The icon of the Tichvine Mother of God (celebrated June 26th) has been venerated in Russia since 1383. She resembles most closely the Byzantine type of the Hodigitria Eleousa (the Merciful). Kondakov is prepared to consider the icon of Tichvine as the replica of a variant which had already appeared in Byzantium.[1] Certainly the classical type of the Byzantine Hodigitria has here undergone certain modifications. The Infant-Emmanuel is no longer represented straight before the spectator, the face turned full towards the faithful: His body is seen from the side turned towards the right shoulder of the Mother, His face is shown three-quarters. The Christ-Emmanuel still holds Himself very upright, seated on His Mother's left arm, but His attitude is less ceremonious: His right leg, folded under the simple himation (with no gold in the weaving), allows one to see the sole of the foot, emerging from under the left leg, which is stretched forward. Also, the gesture of benediction is less solemn: instead of stretching out His arm majestically, the Infant raises the right hand simply in benediction. The body of the Mother of God is slightly turned towards the right side of the icon. Without losing the solemn expression, detached from all human affection, the Hodigitria of Tichvine inclines Her head towards the Infant-Emmanuel. The Mother of God does not turn her look towards the Child, but Her whole attitude, and above all the expression of the pensive and saddened face, shows us a merciful Hodigitria, Who intercedes before Her Son, praying for the fallen world.

The icon reproduced here in colour is probably a work of the XVIth century. Despite later repairs, one recognises the brush of an iconographer of the great school.

The other icon of the same type is very characteristic of Russian painting of the XVIIth century. Comparison of the two icons gives an idea of the latitude allowed to an artist in reproducing a defined iconographic type.

THE TICHVINE MOTHER OF GOD

See reproduction on page 83.
The Tichvine Mother of God, Russian, first half XVIIth century, Icon Museum, Recklinghausen

See reproduction on page 86.
The Tichvine Mother of God. Russian, ca. 1600, Moscow School. Icon Museum Recklinghausen

[1] Op. cit. vol. II, pp. 211–212.


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THE KAZAN MOTHER OF GOD

See reproduction on page 87. Russian, late XVIth century. 9 1/3 x 10 inches. Private collection.

The icon of the Kazan Mother of God (celebrated July 8th and October 22nd) made its apparition in 1579. When one speaks of the "apparition" of an icon, this term, current in old Russian chronicles and hagiographies, means a miraculous event by which an icon, hitherto unknown, becomes notable as a new source of the manifestations of grace. The story of the apparition of the Mother of God at Kazan, the capital of a Tartar Khanat recently conquered by the Russians, may serve as a typical example. Having appeared several times in succession in the dreams of a young girl, the Mother of God commanded her to point out to the ecclesiastical and secular powers the place where Her miraculous icon was to be found, buried in the earth. The clergy and the dignitaries refused to believe the message of the visionary. Finally, the young girl and her mother none the less exhumed the icon. Carried with pomp to the cathedral, the newly appeared icon of the Mother of God became notable through several miracles. The Kazan icon accompanied the national troops who liberated Moscow from the Poles on October 22nd, 1612. Together with the icon of Smolensk, it gave courage to the Russian army in 1812. Its role in the destiny of Russia can be compared to that of the Blachernitissa at Byzantium.

Icons of the Kazan Mother of God are very numerous: it is perhaps the icon of the Mother of God that is most wide-spread in Russia. The icon that we reproduce here must have been made towards the end of the XVIth century, that is a short time after the apparition of the Kazan icon. Our icon reduces the image of the Mother of God to the shoulders: thus, the left hand which supports the Infant and the right hand, with its gesture of prayer, do not appear. In the same way, the Christ-Emmanuel is represented only to the waist. His left hand, which habitually holds a scroll, is hidden under the himation. As on the icon of the Hodigitria of Smolensk, He is clothed with a himation woven of gold and remains standing quite upright, full-face to the faithful. His blessing hand, on our icon, has been damaged by a burn, but one can perceive that the gesture is less solemn than it was on the icon of Smolensk. Even more than on the icon of Tichvine, the Mother of God's head is inclined towards the Infant-Emmanuel. The face remains grave, but expresses at the same time feminine sweetness and a saddened tenderness: without looking directly at Her Son, the Mother of God seems to contemplate His mission of Saviour come into the world to suffer the Passion. It is no longer an official ceremony of presentation. The Byzantine theme of the Hodigitria is completely transformed in the Russian icon of the Kazan Mother of God.

Our icon has recently been cleaned in Paris. It has beautiful colours: the maphorion of fiery purple detaches itself against a background of golden ochre.

THE MOTHER OF GOD ENTHRONED

See reproduction on page 90.
Icon attributed to Cretan School, late XVth-early XVIth century. 25½ x 34 inches. Benaki Museum, Athens

This iconographic type is usually known in Russia under the name of the Cyprus Mother of God[1], whose miraculous mosaic icon was known on Cyprus as early as the beginning of the VIIth century. This image is also called the Pechersky Mother of God from the miraculous icon in the Kiev-Pechersky church.[2] Remarkable versions of this icon are also found in the Mistra churches of Peribleptas (second half of the XIVth century) and Pantanassa (beginning of the XVth century).[3] This image was especially widely used in the mediaeval West, where it became the favourite form of sculptured image of the Mother of God. Images analogous to our icon can also be found among the icons and frescoes on Mt. Athos.[4]

The icon reproduced here is a solemn image of the Mother of God enthroned, holding the Child-Christ straight before Her on Her lap and supporting Him by the shoulder with Her left hand and by the foot with Her right. The Child is represented in the posture of the Pantocrator, blessing with His right hand and holding in His left hand a scroll pressed against His knee. To the spectator's left the Archangel Michael and to the right the Archangel Gabriel approach the throne, making obeisance. Round the margins of the icon, where it is customary to put patron saints of the family, or other specially revered saints, as well as scenes from the Holy Scriptures or the lives of the saints, there are placed on the top margin: the Annunciation[5], the Crucifixion, the Deposition, the Descent into Hell. On the margin to the spectator's left, starting from the top are John the Forerunner, the Apostle Peter, the Great Martyr George and the Great Martyr Katherine. On the right are St. John the Evangelist, the Apostle Paul, the Great Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica and St. Antony the Great. On the bottom margin are Saints Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Constantine and Helen, Basil the Great and St. Nicholas.

The Cretan School to which this icon is attributed originated in the XIVth century. Having been purely provincial during the XIVth and XVth centuries (which is shown by the paintings in Crete), after the fall of Constantinople it becomes its principal successor[6] and begins to play an important part, especially in the XVIth century, but already greatly influenced by the West.

The icon reproduced here represents one of the best examples of this school known to us, and shows that individual painters still kept to the canon of iconography even at the end of the XVIth century. The stern and majestic posture of the Mother of God with the equally majestic Child-Christ, sitting on Her lap as on a throne, is in sharp contrast with the postures of the angels bending towards the Mother of God and stretching out their hands to Her in prayer. Her superiority over them as "more honourable than the angels, the archangels and all creatures" is emphasised here also by the dimensions of Her figure, which is larger than those of the angels.

Prayer to the most Holy Mother of God

No less solemn are the figures of the saints on the margins of the icon. This somewhat official solemnity, characteristic of the strict hierarchy of the Byzantine Empire, is still more emphasised here by the sharp, accentuated lines and the dry detailed treatment which gives a somewhat metallic character, particularly to the garments of the saints on the margins. These qualities, inherited by the Cretan school from the last period of Byzantine art, are its characteristic features. But these peculiarities, though giving a certain coldness to the images, in no way disturb the general unity of the icon, which produces a stern and strong impression.

[1] Commemorated on June 9th.

[2] Commemorated on May 3rd and August 15th.

[3] See N. P. Kondakov, *Iconography of the Mother of God*, vol. II, c. 7. Petrograd, 1915.

[4] Kondakov, ibid.

[5] This Annunciation is almost completely analogous to the icon reproduced in Seminarium Kondakovianum, vol. I, Prague, 1927, with an article by N. Beliaev, devoted to it. It has the same architectural background, the same tree, the same folds of the garments. The only small difference is in the proportions of the Mother of God and the Archangel, which in our icon are more elongated and graceful. On the basis of an analysis of iconography and style and a comparison of this icon with examples of Mount Athos art, frescoes and miniatures the author makes the supposition that this Annunciation was painted by a Cretan painter on Mount Athos in the second part of the XVIth century.

[6] V. N. Lazarev, *History of Byzantine Painting*, vol. I.







"Source of Life", design for an icon, XVIIth century

ICONS OF LOVING-KINDNESS

Icons depicting the mutual gestures of lovingkindness between the Mother of God and the Babe are called "of Lovingkindness".[1] In contrast with the solemn and severe majesty of the icons of the Mother of God as Hodigitria, which emphasise the Divinity of the Child-Christ, icons of Lovingkindness are full of a natural human feeling—of mother-love and tenderness. Here, more than in the Hodigitria, is expressed the human aspect of Divine Motherhood and Incarnation; they underline the fact that the humanity of the Mother of God is also the humanity of Her Son from Whom She is inseparable through His birth.

See reproduction on page 91. The Vladimir Mother of God. Russian, XVIth century, 12¼ x 9¾ inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

An icon of Lovingkindness is an image of the Mother grieving deeply at the coming Passion of the Son and enduring in silence the inevitability of this Passion revealed to Her in advance ("Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also", Luke ii, 35). The Babe Himself is here the same as in the Hodigitria—the Boy Emmanuel, clothed in the same garments showing by their workmanship His pre-eternal Divinity. But here, by the manifestations of His purely human feelings, fear, tenderness and by His gestures, the icon emphasises His human nature.

The type, Lovingkindness, whilst rare in Byzantium was to become extremely widespread on Russian soil, becoming one of the principal themes of Russian icon-painting ,whose tendency towards expressing human feelings purified by Divine Light seems to find its personification in the image of Lovingkindness. "It is one of the summits of Russian art. Neither French Gothic art nor the Italian Renaissance managed to put into this image greater warmth. They created images that were more human, but not more moving. The Russian icons of 'Lovingkindness' justify their name, for looking at them the spectator is moved by a feeling of deep lovingkindness, that feeling which is best described in the poetic words of St. Isaac of Syria. According to his exposition the sign of a merciful heart is when 'a man's heart burns for all creation—men, birds, animals, demons and all creatures. At their memory and sight his eyes shed tears. Great and powerful compassion fills a man's heart, and great suffering wrings it, so that he cannot endure, hear or see any harm or the least pain suffered by a creature. This is why he prays hourly, with tears, for dumb creation, for the enemies of

truth, for those who harm him, that they should be preserved and shown mercy; he prays also for reptiles with a great compassion which wells up in his heart without measure until he becomes likened in this to God'."[2]

As we have said above (p. 39), every human feeling expressed in an icon becomes transfigured and acquires its full meaning in its contact with the world of Divine Grace. Icons of Lovingkindness are perhaps the most striking example of this fact. In all the great variety of human feelings those connected with motherhood are the most intense, for more than any others they are connected not only with the inner but also with the physical life of man. In the icons of Lovingkindness, the motherly caress of the Mother of God is indissolubly connected with Her tormenting pain for Her Son. This compassion she feels for Him becomes here transformed into motherly compassion for all creatures for whom He voluntarily sacrifices Himself. And this godlike compassion transfigures the most instinctive part of human nature, which links man to the whole of creation—motherhood. Contact with the Deity transforms motherly tenderness into all-embracing love and grief for the whole of creation. "From the pain of personal loss grief becomes transformed into compassion for the universal grief, into pain caused by the very fact that suffering exists as an inalienable element of the world's order."[3] This is why the Mother of God is worshipped as the Joy of all created beings with whom She is ontologically one, joy derived from the consciousness and belief in the motherly intercession of the "merciful heart" that cannot bear the suffering to which these created beings are subjected. That all-embracing love, which knows no laws except compassion and suffering, finds its fullest expression in the image of the Mother grieving for the crucified Son.

This content of icons of Lovingkindness, with all their warmth and deeply moving quality, completely excludes all the sentimentality and sugariness belonging to a narrow, egoistical feeling. Neither has it any dry abstract schematism.

The general type of Lovingkindness has a great many variants. Each of the four icons reproduced here reveals and transmits its content in its own way.

[1] The Russian is Umileniye. This name is probably a translation of the Greek name, the Mother of God—*'Ελεοῦσα*. It has seemed best, after considering possible alternatives, to adopt the title of "Lovingkindness" for the type of icons with which this and the following four sections are concerned. There is no quite satisfactory English translation for *Umileniye*, as used in this context. Various words such as mercy, compassion, pity, tenderness suggest themselves, but are either too limited or sentimental or both. The nearest translation is probably "lovingkindness" taken in its fullest sense as including all the gifts of Grace; it is used by Coverdale, and subsequent English translators, in many Old Testament passages when the Septuagint has 'ἔλεος.

[2] *Ascetic Discourses of our Holy Father Isaac of Syria*, Moscow, 1858, quoted from V. N. Lazarev, *The Art of Novgorod*, 1947, Moscow-Leningrad, p. 114.

[3] A. I. Anissimov, *Icon of the Vladimir Mother of God*, Prague, 1928, p. 32.




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THE VLADIMIR MOTHER OF GOD

See reproduction on page 94
Russian, XVth century. 7 x 8 inches. Coll. M. Lanza

One of the most ancient versions of the image of Lovingkindness is the famous Byzantine icon of the Vladimir Mother of God, belonging to the XIth or the beginning of the XIIth century.

According to tradition the icon of the Vladimir Mother of God was painted by the holy Evangelist Luke during the Mother of God's lifetime.[1] Seeing the icon brought to Her, She repeated her prophecy: "All generations shall call me blessed" (Luke i, 48), and looking at it said with authority: "with this image is My grace and power". According to the annals this icon, brought to Kiev from Constantinople and now in the Tretiakov Gallery, has been in Russia since 1155. The same year it was taken to the land of Suzdal and in 1161 was moved to Vladimir from which it got its name, and finally in 1395 to Moscow. This icon occupied a quite special position in ancient Russia. Chronicles record every time it was moved from one place to another and explain by its influence every important event in Russian history. Throughout the centuries this icon gives its protection to the Russian people and is venerated as the greatest holy treasure of the nation. The volunteer army which delivered Moscow from the Poles in 1612 fought at the same time also for the Vladimir icon: "It is better for us to die than to deliver the image of the immaculate Mother of God of Vladimir to desecration."[2]

Stich. to Litiya Tone 8, on the commemoration day of the icon

The distinctive feature of the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God is the posture of Herself and the Child Whom She holds in Her right arm, bending Her head towards Him. With Her left hand She either touches the Child's shoulder, or (practically always) holds it to Her breast, prayerfully extending Her hand to Him and at the same time directing the spectator's attention to Him. The Divine Child is always depicted with His left foot tucked under Him with only the sole of the foot showing. The icon reproduced here is a version of the XIth–XIIth century icon mentioned above from which it differs by two features. Here the Mother of God's eyes are turned not on the spectator but over the head of the Child. The Child has His left arm round His Mother's neck not directly but over the maphorion so that His left hand is not visible. The figure of the Mother of God, beautifully placed in the panel, is full of solemn calm. The fused outline of the two figures gives the icon a strongly monumental quality, characteristic of the best period of Russian icon-painting. The Divine Child is represented with a lively and tender movement; pressing His face to the Mother of God's cheek He seems to try and calm Her hidden grief. Paying no heed to the caress, the Mother of God gazes into the distance with a look full of deep feeling and sorrow. Her stern and concentrated face, turned towards the caressing Son, is inwardly turned not to the human Child but to the Maker of the world born of Her. As "the warm Intercessor before God" and the "strong Protector of the world"[3] She bends towards the Child, seeking from Him mercy for those who come to Him and covering them by Her intercession.

The Service of the day

[1] In orthodox iconography there are several icons attributed to the Evangelist Luke. This should in no way be understood in the sense that precisely those icons were the work of the Evangelist's hand, but that they correspond to the tradition established by him. In other words they reproduce icons at one time painted by the Evangelist Luke. Therefore the words uttered by the Mother of God on seeing Her image painted by the Evangelist Luke are preserved by the Church in services dedicated to several icons of the Mother of God. The apostolic tradition should be taken here in the same sense as we understand it when speaking of the apostolic liturgy or apostolic rules. They go back to the Apostles not because the Apostles themselves had written them, but because they bear the Apostles' authority and character.

[2] The Vladimir icon of the Mother of God is commemorated three times a year and all three dates are connected with the miraculous deliverance of Moscow from the Tartars: on August 26th 1395, June 23rd 1480 and May 21st. This last date commemorates two events: the renewal of the icon in 1514 with the participation of Metropolitan Barlaam (an icon-painter) and deliverance from the Tartars in 1521.

[3] *Glory of the Mother of God*, published by the Moscow Synod Press, Moscow, 1907.

THE TOLGA MOTHER OF GOD

See reproduction on page 95.
The Mother of God (Umilenie). Russian, beginning XVth century. Novgorod [?]. Icon Museum, Recklinghausen.[1]

The Tolga icon of the Mother of God derives its name from the place where it appeared in 1314 on the river Tolga near Yaroslavl, and where later a monastery was built to house the icon.[2]

Icons of the Tolga Mother of God are varied: sometimes She is depicted sitting on a throne with the Child standing on Her lap, as for instance in the famous icon of that name in the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow; in others She is depicted half-length with a full-length figure of the Child, apparently reproducing the icon in the Tretiakov Gallery. The icon shown here is a third variant of the Tolga Mother of God. It differs from other icons in that here the Divine Child does not stretch Himself with an anxious impulse towards His Mother, but stands calmly with His hand round Her neck. This icon is devoid of all drama. It is less intimate than the other icons of Lovingkindness reproduced here, but has more depth and meaning. Motherly tenderness acquires here a passionless calm, bordering on detachment. All human feelings and experiences have found here their ultimate meaning and so are brought to the higher peace. The icon is striking for its exceptional spiritual purity. It seems to be a pictorial expression of the words of the canticle sung to the Mother of God on the commemoration day of this icon: "There is no flaw in Thy beauty, O Virgin: for Thou alone art pure, having appeared from eternity, O Glorious One, and having illumined the world with the rays of Thy virginity and the light of Thy purity."

The figure of the Mother of God seems to be devoid of physical volume and weight. Her disproportionately small hands do not grip but merely touch the Child Christ embracing Her. Everything here is centred on the illumined faces devoid of all emotions. The dark eyes with their long lashes, full of secret sorrow, gaze into the distance and at the same time are turned inwards into Her own depth. The illumined sorrowful face of the Mother of God is calmly bent towards Her Son in certitude of His mercy towards creatures; and He, pressing His face to Her cheek, as it were answers Her sorrow by blessing Her and the world.

The execution of the icon is in keeping with its unusual depth. The smooth flowing rhythm of lines creates a mood of calm concentration. The icon is characterised by remarkable drawing and the nobility of a somewhat "archaic" form which emphasises and enhances still more the spiritual content of the image. It is painted with exceptional artistic tact in a simple scale of colours. The faces are painted in a soft "fused" manner, with delicate transitions from light to greenish shadows. Their soft overall outline gives them a particular wholeness, fullness and life. The tunic of the Saviour, with a greenish *clavus* and belt, is painted in liquid yellow ochre with folds done in white and seems luminous from the white background showing through. The dark maphorion of the Mother of God has soft highlights of red ochre. Neither the drawing, the form nor the colours are in any degree heavy. Looking at the icon one gets the impression that it poured itself from the artist's brush, as would prayer that is as natural for a saint as breathing.

[1] Catalogue of the Icon Museum, Recklinghausen.

[2] At first a small "one-day" church was built on the spot where the icon was found (the name given to churches built in one day which was a fairly frequent occurrence in old Russia); here the icon was placed and on the same day the commemoration of its revelation was fixed for August 8th (Menaion for August 8th).





THE KORSUN MOTHER OF GOD

See reproduction on page 98.
Russian, XVIth century, Moscow School. 7 x 10¼ inches. Coll. National Museum, Paris

The name of Korsun icon of the Mother of God comes from the ancient Greek town of Korsun or Chersonesus, a commercial port situated in Crimea near Sebastopol where, according to old annals, the holy Prince Vladimir was baptised in 988. Generally all Greek icons which came through this port to Russia were called Korsun icons. This name was preserved by the icon of Lovingkindness we are analyzing, the prototype of which was a Greek icon from Korsun.

A characteristic feature of icons of this type is, first, the head of the Mother of God strongly bent to the left, second, the Child's himation which has slipped down from the upper part of His body revealing a white tunic which is often, as in the icon reproduced here, ornamented with embroidery. The postures of the Divine Child in these icons vary. In some He is depicted in a calm posture with both legs hanging down, in others, as in our icon, with the right leg tucked under so that only the foot shows. Moreover, in many icons of this type, He makes a gesture of affection, clinging with His right hand to Her chin or cheek. Unlike that in many other icons of Lovingkindness, the posture of the Child in the icon reproduced is not devoid of a certain dramatic quality. As if in fear, He impulsively stretches towards His Mother's face, whilst She, as though comforting Him, gazes with grief on the spectator. Compared with the preceding icons of Lovingkindness, full of stern inner concentration, here the face of the Mother of God is more warm and intimate. Owing to the fact that her gaze is directed not in line with the movement of her head but towards the spectator, the scene does not represent an action closed within itself; on the contrary, it is directly connected with the external world. The motherly tenderness of the Mother of God towards Her Son is at the same time turned outwards. Calmly bending towards the Child, She embraces with her gaze this world spread before Her eyes, drawing it towards participation in the prayer with which She intercedes for it before God.

This small icon, evidently for household use, strikes one by its inner warmth, which is enhanced by its general warm colouring and by its masterly execution, showing great refinement. The technique of the brushwork, which gives the pleasing effect of enamel, is both soft and exquisite.

THE KORSUN MOTHER OF GOD

See reproduction on page 99.
Russian, late XVIth century. 8 x 14 inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

The icon reproduced here is another version of the icon of the Korsun Mother of God. Some of these icons depict the Mother of God and the Child turned towards the left of the spectator, others to the right. Thus this icon can have the same composition turned to either side.[1]

The distinctive feature of the icons of Lovingkindness of this type is that they depict only the upper parts of the Divine Mother and Child, practically nothing but their faces and hands, which emphasises still more the intimate character of the icon of Lovingkindness. Of the icons of this type reproduced here the present icon is more imbued with human feeling. Both composition and content emphasise motherhood particularly strongly. Tightly pressed to one another the faces constitute as it were one whole, emphasising the physical link between the Mother and the Child. Everything here is centred on the impulse of the heart. The faces are devoid of sternness and are full of a particular intimacy and warmth. The Divine Child is depicted with a strong, impulsive and even somewhat agitated movement. He clutches with His right hand the edge of the Mother of God's maphorion and, pressed against Her cheek, as it were pulls Her towards Him. With a gesture full of tenderness the Mother of God hugs Her Son with both hands. Her pensive, pure and tender gaze is turned into the distance. In this icon, so markedly emphasising the physical link and tenderness of motherhood, the white scroll which the Child holds in His left hand close to His face gives the impression of an extraneous object, which has forced its way into this image of an intimate human feeling. In contrast with the human intimacy emphasised by the image, this scroll in its turn emphasises the advent in the world of the Wisdom of God in the person of the cuddling Child, Wisdom from contact with which sufferings and sorrow are illumined and so turn to joy.

This is why icons of Lovingkindness, showing all the inscrutability of the combination of the childish helplessness of the Babe, in need of motherly care and tenderness, with His Divine omnipotence, engender and communicate that feeling of deep lovingkindness which leads to the "burning of man's heart", "likening him in this to God" in the words of St. Isaac of Syria. This is why, too, in the services dedicated to icons of the Mother of God, sorrowful and repentant melodies are intermingled with joyous faith in Her ceaseless intercession and in the mercy of Her Son, Who offered Himself as a voluntary sacrifice.

[1] One of these icons with the composition turned in a direction opposite to our icon is reproduced in the *History of Russian Art* by I. Grabar (p. 82). This icon is painted by a pupil of the famous icon-painter of the Stroganov School, Prokopy Tchirin and dated circa 1620. As in our icon the contours are outlined in gold, which is typical for that period. Yet both in style and content it is far below our icon, which is painted with much greater freedom and homogeneity of forms and in which the gold work is light and unconstrained. This gives reason to suppose that our icon may belong to the end of the XVIth century.

THE MOTHER OF GOD OF THE PASSION

Opposite page: Russian triptych of 1641. 17½ x 6 inches. Coll. P. M. J. Rouet de Journel, Paris

The icon of the Mother of God of the Passion ("Strastnaia") belongs to an iconographic type which appeared in the XIVth century in the frescoes of Serbia (churches of Lesnovo and of Konce). Two angels holding the instruments of the Passion are represented in the upper corners of the icon. The Infant-Christ turns His head, looking at them with astonishment. In fear, He seeks refuge with His Mother.

The icon reproduced here is a triptych, in which the image of the Mother of God occupies the central panel (each panel measures 16×14 cm). The Mother of God holds on Her right arm the Christ-Emmanuel, Who looks at one of the two angels, turning His head upwards towards the left hand corner of the icon. In fear He seizes with His two hands the left hand of His Mother. The Mother of God has Her head slightly inclined: Her look expresses a mournful resignation.

The two side panels each contain twelve personages on foot, ranged in two rows. The upper row of the left-hand panel (starting from the centre): Saint John the Baptist, the Archangel Michael, the Apostle Peter, the three Fathers of the Church—Saint Basil, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, Saint John Chrysostom. The same row on the right panel: the Archangel Gabriel (by a graving error he bears the name of Michael on the metal covering of the icon), the Apostles Paul and John, the three Metropolitans of Moscow—Saints Peter, Alexis and Jonas. The lower row (left panel), Saint Nicholas, Saint Sergius of Radonej, Saint Euthemius of Suzdal, Saint Cyril of Bielozersk, Saints Zossima and Sabbatius of Solovki. Same row (right panel): Saint Leontius of Rostov, Saint Alexander Nevsky, Saint John Archbishop of Novgorod, the Holy Martyrs Catherine and Paraskeva, Saint Euphrosyne of Alexandria.

The painting carefully renders all details, recalling the calligraphic style of the miniaturists. A covering of gold, richly chased, contemporary with the icon, covers the three panels. The date and source of the icon can be established thanks to the inscription on the reverse of the central panel: "March 22nd, (7)149 (equals 1641 of our era) the cellarer of Troïtza, the Staretz Alexander Boulatnikov, has blessed with this triptych his familiar (keleinik), the Staretz Joachim of Solovki." In his notice (not published), on the triptych, Father M. J. Rouet de Journel recalls that Alexander Boulatnikov, an important personage, godfather to the children of the Tsar, exercised the functions of cellarer at the Lavra of Trinity-Saint Sergius from 1622 to 1642. He started his monastic life in the Monastery of Solovki, where he retired again for several years, after having resigned his post of cellarer of the Lavra. His links with the two great monasteries explain the presence on the left-hand panel of Saint Sergius (founder of the Lavra of Trinity) and of Saints Zossima and Sabbatius (founders of Solovki). Saint Alexander Nevsky, Saint John of Novgorod, and the three saints of the right-hand panel, probably represent the patrons of Alexander Boulatnikov and of his family.







SAINT JOHN THE FORERUNNER

Opposite page: Russian icon from a Deisis, XVIth century. 10¼ x 12 inches. Former Coll. A. Poliakov, Paris

Saint John, Forerunner and Baptiser of the Lord, occupies a particular place in the cult of the Church. The Tuesday of the liturgical week is consecrated to his memory and a Synaxis of Saint John the Baptist is celebrated the day after the Feast of the Baptism of Christ (January 7th). The Church celebrates not only the day of his death (August 29th) and the discoveries and translations of his relics, as she does for other saints, but also his Conception (September 24th) and his Birth (June 24th), as she does for the Mother of God.

Saint John the Baptist is the greatest "among them that are born of women", and none the less the "least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he" (Matt. xi, 11). This is because the work of the Forerunner belongs to the Old Testament: it was necessary then that he should decrease before Christ Who increased (John iii, 30). Saint John went before the Messiah "in the spirit and power of Elias" (Luke i, 17), that other mysterious Forerunner of the second and glorious coming of Christ. But whilst Elias made fire come down from heaven, the Forerunner of the first coming of the Christ Saviour "did no miracle" (John x, 41). He was "more than a prophet" (Matt. xi, 9), the peak of the sanctity of the Old Testament, and none the less, before Him Who came after him, the Forerunner remained stripped of every outward sign of his vocation, to be nothing but "the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord" (John i, 20–23). Whilst Elias, having risen to heaven on a chariot of fire, had to return to earth with Enoch, to bear witness and to die as a martyr at the end of the times (Rev. xi, 3–10), Saint John the Baptist had already given his testimony and suffered his martyrdom before Christ had accomplished His work of Redeemer. After the Ascension of the Lord, the Church which will have received from heaven the baptism by the deifying fire of the Holy Ghost (Matt. iii, 11) will in the end be able to exalt the Forerunner of Christ. She will recognise the true greatness of Saint John the Baptist who is, after the Mother of God, the greatest among men. On the icons of the "Deisis" the Mother of God and the Friend of the Bridegroom (John iii, 29) will take their place on either side of the Christ Pantocrator.

Our icon (XVIth century, Russian) should make a counterpart to the icon of the Mother of God in an ensemble of the three images of the "Deisis". Represented half-length, the Forerunner is bending forward, turning towards the left side of the icon: he is looking at Christ. Making a gesture of prayer with his left hand, he addresses himself at the same time to the faithful, to whom he presents, with his right hand, an unfolded scroll on which one reads his exhortation to penitence: "Repent ye: for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand... now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire" (Matt. iii, 2, 10). Over his raiment of camel's hair (Matt. iii, 4) Saint John the Baptist wears a dark himation. His long hair falls over his shoulders, his beard is shaggy: he is a man of the desert, prototype of the great Christian anchorites. The ascetic features of his elongated face belong to the austere message of a preacher of penitence.

This icon has undergone some transformations. The contours of Saint John the Baptist were edged with gold in the XVIIth century. The painting was transferred to another larger panel: one still sees the old frame which cut a part of the halo. The little black square at the bottom shows the state of the icon before cleaning, which was recently done in Paris.



SAINT JOHN THE FORERUNNER

Opposite page: Greek, ca. 1600 Photo: Castle De Wijenburgh Echteld, Netherlands

June 24th, Vespers, Canticles of St. Andrew of Crete

August 29th, Vespers, Canticles of St. Germanus of Constantinople

The second icon of Saint John the Baptist which we reproduce here represents him with two large wings behind his back. By lending to the messenger of the Messiah the appearance of an angel, the iconographers were following to the letter the words of the Prophet Malachi (iii, 1) referring to the Forerunner (Matt. xi, 10): "This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." This iconographic type already appeared in the XIIIth century in Serbia on a fresco of Arilgie[1] and in illuminations. Icons of the Forerunner with wings were to become more frequent from the XVIth century onwards.

The image of the winged Forerunner corresponds not only to his function as messenger, but also to the ascetic life of a "terrestrial angel and celestial man". It is one of the multiple aspects of his sanctity: "How shall we call thee O prophet? Angel, apostle or martyr? Angel, for thou hast led an incorporeal life. Apostle, for thou hast taught the nations. Martyr, for thou hast been beheaded for the Christ."

On our icon, the winged Forerunner stands before the face of the Christ for Whom he must prepare the way. Christ appears half-length in the celestial sphere, at the upper left-hand corner of the icon. Represented on foot and turned towards the left, the Forerunner stands out against the golden background of the sky. He extends his left hand in prayer, and holds a cross and an open scroll in his right hand. Clothed in camel's hair and with a himation which covers his torso, leaving his two arms free, Saint John preaches repentance "in the wilderness of Judaea" (Matt. iii, 1) and "into all the country about Jordan" (Luke iii, 3). The conical rocks behind the Forerunner represent the wilderness. Some bushes and an axe "laid unto the root of the trees" (Matt iii, 10) allude to the words of his preaching. In the lower left-hand corner a cup with the head of Saint John must recall that he would end his life in martyrdom.

[1] N. Okounev, in *Seminarium Kondakovianum* VIII (1936), pl. IX, 2.



The cosmos of celestial powers, which the Father created by the Word and sanctified in the Holy Spirit, is higher by its nature than the terrestrial world. The appearance of angels is intolerable for the human being (Dan. viii, 17–18; x, 5–17). The liturgical texts call them "redoubtable, terrifying": "let us rid our spirits of all corruptible nature, that our terrestrial lips may sing with fear the praise of the incorporeal forces, which are like fire, like flame, like light." Living in the Glory of the "Triune Sun", the angelic spirits are deified creatures, vehicles of the uncreated glory: "God-fearing embers, enflamed by the fire of the divine nature." "Secondary lights", they spread through the universe "the fire of the inaccessible Divinity, ceaselessly chanting with lips of flame the hymn of the Trinity: Holy, Holy, Holy our God."

Office of St. Michael

Canon of the Celestial Powers, Tone 2

Matins of St. Michael Stich. of Tone 5

None the less, despite this excellence of their nature, "the economy of the mystery" of the Incarnation of the Word remains hidden from the angels, who have known it only by the Church (Eph. iii, 9–11; 1 Peter i, 12). Having ascended to heaven "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion" (Eph. i, 21), the God-Man, exalting the human nature which He had assumed, "formed the one Church of angels and of men". The cosmic order was thus transmuted by the fact of the Incarnation: the Virgin "Who had given birth to the Fire of the inflamed ministering-spirits", becomes "the first participant of Divinity among all creatures"; "more eminent than the incorporeal armies, surpassing the celestial hierarchies", She receives from the angels the glory which belongs to Her.

Canon of the Celestial Powers, Tone 8

Monday Matins, Tone 1

The angels are known to us above all by the ministry which they exercise vis-à-vis the terrestrial world, ministry in which they appear to us as "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. i, 14). Hence the name *ἄγγελος*, "messenger", sent to announce or to accomplish the will of God. According to the degrees of their ministry, the celestial powers form a hierarchy, whose different ranks, in part mentioned in the Scriptures, have found a systematic elaboration in the treatise "Of the Celestial Hierarchy" of Dionysius.[1] The angelic hosts have to defend the creation against the spiritual powers which seek to cast it into ruin. The Apocalypse shows us the celestial war, in which Michael and his angels fight against the dragon and his angels (Rev. xii, 7–9), a war which continues on earth in the spiritual combats in which men are assisted by angels. Hence the warrior-like character that angelic apparitions often take. Thus, the "captain of the host of the Lord" appeared to Joshua with a sword in his hand (Joshua v, 13–15). The Archangel Michael "chief captain of the host" (Archistrategos) presides over the struggle against the forces of the demons: "there where thy grace appears, the power of the demons is pursued; for the fallen Lucifer cannot bear to see thy light. We pray thee then to extinguish his burning features, directed against us... and to free us from his temptations."

Matins of St. Michael

The Feast of Saint Michael and of all the incorporeal powers is celebrated on November 8th. On September 6th the Church commemorates a miraculous intervention of Saint Michael. A Synaxis of the Archangel Gabriel is celebrated the day after the Annunciation (March 26th). Finally, every Monday of the liturgic week is consecrated to the cult of the angels.

See reproduction on page 110.
Archangel Michael Balkan, ca. 1600. 25 x 14½ inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

The icon that we reproduce here (Balkan, ca. 1600) is of the Archangel Michael. In his quality of Captain of the Hosts, the warrior angel wears a cloak which, on our icon, is red in colour. The sword that he holds in his right hand is at the same time his weapon and the insignia of his dignity of commander. In his left hand he carries before his breast an image of Jesus Christ. The head of the Archangel is adorned with ribbons. Habitually, the ends of the ribbons flow from either side of the head: they should symbolise the spiritual hearing of the angel, attentive to the divine commands. On our icon these ribbons are partly effaced. The inscription at the top reads: "The Archangel Michael."

[1] P.G. 3, Coll. 120-340.

PORTRAITS OF THE APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL AND AN ICON OF THE APOSTLE PAUL

See reproduction on page 111.
Detail of an icon by Andrew Rublev and Roman medallion from the Vatican Museum

The images reproduced here are interesting from several points of view. First of all, the Roman medal of the IInd or IIIrd centuries from the Vatican museum representing the heads of the two foremost Apostles, Peter and Paul, proves the existence of images of the Apostles in the first centuries of Christianity and thus corroborates the testimony of Eusebius, mentioned earlier (see p. 25). The characteristic features of the persons represented clearly demonstrate that they are portraits and thus show that they reproduce images undoubtedly made from direct observation. To whom this image belonged, whether to a Christian or to a pagan, grateful for some favour done to him by the Apostles, we do not know.

The other image reproduced here—the head of Apostle Paul—is a detail of an icon painted by St. Andrew (Rublev) between 1408 and 1425 for the iconostasis of the Zvenigorod Cathedral of the Assumption.[1] If we compare this head with the head of Apostle Paul on the medal (to the left of the spectator), we shall see that both represent the head of the same man, on the medal in profile and on the icon in three-quarter face. Despite an interval of 12 or 13 centuries between the medal and the icon, the latter reproduces the same face with its characteristic peculiarities and even with a certain anatomical precision. There is the same shape of the head, the same high bald forehead, the same slightly protruding lower jaw, the same beard falling down in curly strands. This resemblance is proof of the reverent care with which the portrayed features of the saints are preserved in Orthodox iconography. There is no doubt that the Russian icon-painter of the XVth century had never seen the Roman portraits and probably did not even suspect their existence. In reproducing the portrayed features he was guided by the tradition of icon-painting, transmitted through centuries by the icon.

Yet, in spite of the obvious likeness of the two images of Apostle Paul, there is a great difference between them. This difference, in its turn, illustrates clearly the process of translating a portrait into an icon. Preserving, as we have said earlier, the characteristic features of a concrete personality, i.e. a certain known historical reality, the icon transmits it linked with Divine reality (see p. 36), that is, depicts the flesh imbued with the all-sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit. This combination removes the sense of the weight of the flesh, the look of the perishable body, so palpably reproduced in the medal. The features of the face, its lines, the hair, all are brought into strict harmonious order. The inner life in God finds its outward manifestation in the illumined face reproduced in the icon, and the somewhat ailing face of Apostle Paul on the medal is translated here into his transfigured, eternal look.

Moreover, if we compare the head of Apostle Peter reproduced on the medal with his images on icons (see for instance icons of the Assumption, the Descent of the Holy Spirit and others), we see here too the same likeness, the same exactness of historical reality which characterises Orthodox icon-painting.

[1] I. Grabar, *Problems of Restoration.* Moscow, 1926.


ΜΙΧΑΗΛ



ST. LUKE THE EVANGELIST

See reproduction on page 114. *Apostle and Evangelist Luke, Russian, XVIth century, Novgorod. Icon Museum, Recklinghausen*

Of St. Luke, the first Evangelist and the author of the Acts of the Apostles, considered also, later, to be the first iconographer, the "Monarchian Prologues" inform us: "Luke was a Syrian of Antioch and a doctor by profession. He became a disciple of the Apostles, and later an intimate companion of Paul, up to the moment of his martyrdom. After having served the Lord ceaselessly, and having had neither wife nor children, he died in Boeotia at the age of eighty-four years, filled with the Holy Spirit."[1]

Our icon was part of the left leaf of a Russian "royal door" of the XVth or XVIth century. St. Luke is represented sitting on a low seat, before a writing desk, in a room (this is suggested by the architectural background). Resting his two bare feet on a stool, he is writing in a book, which he holds open on his knees. The words which can be read in the book are those of the opening of the Gospel according to St. Luke. St. Luke is a man of middle age, with a beard and crimped hair. Turning towards the right side of the icon, his face is shown three-quarters view. He is clothed in a tunic, with his himation thrown over the left shoulder, to leave the right arm free. The face expresses the pious attentiveness of the Evangelist, who is recording a text inspired by God.

[1] Corssen, "Monarch. Prologe", in *Texte und Untersuchungen*, XV, 1.

"John, then, the last (of the Evangelists)", says Clement of Alexandria, "seeing that the bodily features had been brought to light in the Gospels, and being urged by the disciples and divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit, composed a spiritual Gospel."[1] Last in the time of its composition, the fourth Gospel is the first in its importance, according to Origen: "I think that, just as the four Gospels are the foundations of the faith of the Church—and on these foundations rests the entire world reconciled with God in the Christ... so too the Gospel according to St. John is the principle of the Gospels, and no one can seize its meaning, who has not leaned on Jesus' bosom, and has not received from Jesus—Mary, Who has become his Mother also."[2] In conformity with this conception, St. John receives the first place among the four Evangelists on the iconostasis.

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST

See reproduction on page 115. *Russian XVIth century. Moscow School. 40 x 34 cm. Photo: Temple Gallery, London*

Our icon belongs to the left leaf of a Russian "royal door" of the XVIth century. St. John is represented in the desert: he is seated on a rock, in a kind of rocky cavern. He is an old man with a very high and bold forehead, clothed in a long dark blue himation, which envelops his whole body. He is turning his head to the left, towards the upper corner of the icon, as if he listened to a voice coming from heaven. Often behind him, in the upper left hand corner, a part of the celestial sphere is represented, with rays coming forth from it. The Revelation (i, 10–12) also shows us St. John turning to look behind him, to see "the voice that spake with" him. In his left hand the Evangelist holds a scroll, while with his right hand he makes a gesture addressed to the scribe, who is writing at his dictation. The scribe is a young man with a nimbus, clothed in a scarlet himation. His name is indicated above his head: it is Prochorus, one of the seven deacons (Acts, vi, 5), in whom a tradition, represented by several authors, would see the nephew of St. Stephen and the companion of St. John.[3] Leaning over the book that he holds on his knees, Prochorus is writing the first words of the Gospel according to St. John: "In the beginning was the Word."

On the frame of the icon, at the top, one sees in a semi-circle the cherubic creature, the symbol of the Evangelist. St. Irenaeus, who was the first to see in the four sacred creatures of Ezekiel's vision (Ez. i, 5–14), the symbol of the four Evangelists, attributed the lion to St. John and the eagle to St. Mark.[4] A contrary attribution has been adopted in the West. Both traditions must have existed together in Russia, where, towards the end of the XVIth century, the eagle replaces the lion on icons of St. John the Evangelist.

[1] In the Fragment of the Hypotyposes, quoted by Eusebius, H.E. VI, 14; P.G. 20, col. 552B. Cf. St. Irenaeus, Adv. Haer. III, I, 1; P.G. 7, col. 845.

[2] Prologue of the Commentary on the Gospel of St. John, sec. 6; P.G. 14, coll. 29–32.

[3] See in Bolland., AASS., April 1st, p. 818. An apochryphal "Historia Prochori, Christi discipuli, de vita B. Johannis apostoli" was published in *Magna Bibl. Patrum*, Cologne, 1618.

[4] Adv. Haer III, 2, 8: P.G. 7, coll. 885—890.





AN ICON OF THE HOLY BISHOP ABRAHAM

Opposite page: Coptic icon, VIth century. From Bâuit. Kaiser Friedrich Museum, Berlin

The icon of the holy bishop Abraham belongs to the few very ancient icons known to us which have remained from before the iconoclastic period. During this latter time, as is known, everything was destroyed that could be destroyed. Icons remained only in remote provincial corners where the arm of state officials did not reach. One such icon is that of St. Abraham reproduced here; it is at present in the Frederick the Great Museum in Berlin. This icon is of Egyptian origin and is supposed to be an image of a bishop—prior of a monastery in Baouit. It is painted in tempera in the primitive style typical of Coptic paintings not only of that period but of all times. The drawing is strong and full of life. For instance in the uplifted left shoulder the effort with which the saint holds the Gospels in his left hand is exactly caught and well translated. The face expresses a great and indomitable spiritual power, but connected with an excessive detachment and even a certain breaking with life. Although unquestionably a portrait, the image bears a simplified, schematic character, emphasised in the sharply delineated features of the face and the rough dark outline. This icon seems to have more in common, both inwardly and outwardly, with Romanesque frescoes than with Russian or Byzantine icon-painting. The method by which it expresses the inner state of St. Abraham, his sanctity, indicates an outward, somewhat formal understanding, rather than an understanding based on experience.



Saints celebrated in January. Design for an icon, upper half





ST. GREGORY PALAMAS

Opposite page: Greek icon, late XIVth century. Photo: Aurora Publications

Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica (died 1359), belongs to the great line of the Fathers of the Church. Celebrated twice in the course of the liturgical year (November 14th and the second Sunday of Lent), Saint Gregory Palamas is glorified as "invincible champion of the theologians", "preacher of grace". The name of Saint Gregory Palamas belongs to the work of the great Byzantine Councils of the XIVth century, so important for Orthodox dogma and spirituality: it was the victory of grace over the remains of Hellenic naturalism, at the same time as an expression of the Christian Hellenism of the Fathers.

Every bishop-theologian who has expressed the truth of the faith, defending it against error, once canonised is venerated by the Orthodox Church as our Father among the Saints (*ἐν ἁγίοις πατὴρ ἡμῶν*), independently of the epoch in which he lived. The "patristic epoch" is not a kind of "golden age" limited to the first eight centuries. We have placed the image of Saint Gregory Palamas before the icons of other Fathers chronologically earlier than Palamas, because it offers a typical example of the icon of a bishop. Seen full face, the holy Hierarch, clothed in his pontifical vestments (saccos and omophorion decorated with crosses), blesses with his right hand and holds the Gospel in his left. It is the image of the Father of the Church, who "begets through the preaching of the Gospel and swaddles by the blessing of the hands".[1]

The icon that we reproduce here was executed about 1370–1380, that is to say shortly after the canonisation of the great Bishop of Thessalonica (1368).[2] This icon is then a portrait, representing the features of the living person remaining in the memory of those who had seen him. However, from the iconographical point of view it has a defect: the spiritual aspect of the Saint, "preacher of the Divine Light, initiate in the celestial mysteries of the Trinity", is not sufficiently brought out. On the contrary, the iconographer has underlined the external qualities of Saint Gregory Palamas, those which above all struck his contemporaries; this face expresses the fine intelligence of a dialectician, invincible in theological discussions, without allowing one to divine the inner life of a great contemplative.

Vespers of the second Sunday in Lent, Stich. of Tone 2

The first words of the inscription are effaced. One can however read: ... *ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΣ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ Ο ΠΑΛΑΜΑΣ* (Archbishop Gregory of Thessalonica, Palamas).

[1] Saint Basil, Homily 8. P.G. 31, col. 305. (Cf. 1 Cor. iv, 15.)

[2] V. N. Lazarev, *Byzantine Icons of the XIVth–XVth Centuries*, Burlington Magazine, London, Dec. 1937, p. 256.

THE HOLY BISHOP NICHOLAS, THE MIRACLE-WORKER OF MYRA[1]

See reproduction on page 122.
Russian XVIth century. 19¼ x 28¾ inches. Former Coll. A. Poliakov, Paris

The quite exceptional veneration of St. Nicholas is well known. He is venerated not only by Christians but often also by Muslims. In the liturgic weekly cycle of the Orthodox Church, among the days of the week dedicated to the Saviour and to different orders of heavenly and earthly sanctity, only three persons are singled out by name: the Mother of God, John the Forerunner and St. Nicholas. The reason for this special veneration of this bishop, who left neither theological works nor other writings, is evidently that the Church sees in him a personification of a shepherd, of its defender and intercessor. "Having fulfilled the Gospel of Christ... thou hast appeared in truth as a most hallowed shepherd to the world."[2] According to his Life, when St. Nicholas was raised to the dignity of bishop he said: "...This dignity and this office demand different usages, in order that one should live no longer for oneself but for others."[3] This "life for others" is his characteristic feature and is manifested by the great variety of forms of his solicitude for men—his care for their preservation, their protection from the elements, from human injustice, from heresies and so forth. This solicitude was accompanied by numerous miracles both during his life and after his death. Indefatigable intercessor, steadfast, uncompromising fighter for Orthodoxy[4], "he was meek and gentle in his disposition and humble in spirit".

In accordance with his character and significance the Orthodox iconography of this saint is also varied. In many icons on the upper part, on either side of the image of St. Nicholas, are placed the Saviour with the Gospels on one side and the Mother of God on the other, holding the bishop's omophorion in Her hand. This image, showing the providential character of his episcopal activity, is based on the tale told by St. Methodius, Patriarch of Constantinople (842–846). In this tale St. Methodius says that shortly before his election as bishop St. Nicholas saw the Saviour on one side of him, handing him the Gospels and the Mother of God on the other, placing on his shoulders the bishop's omophorion. Other, very popular, icons of St. Nicholas depict him full-length, with a sword in his right hand and holding a church in his left. The sword, the symbol of his spiritual armament, and the church emphasise here St. Nicholas' significance as an implacable fighter for purity of faith and as protector from heresies of the flock entrusted to him. Of these images the best known are the wooden statues of St. Nicholas of Mojaisk, as they are called, belonging to the beginning of the XIVth century, and St. Nicholas of Pskov, of the XVth and XVIth centuries.

Our icon represents an image of St. Nicholas surrounded by twelve selected scenes from his life. In the upper part of the icon is placed the "order", ending with the Apostles, after whom there follows the place of St. Nicholas himself as their successor and the head of his Church—a bishop. This points both to his place in the Church hierarchy and to the completion of his life journey, shown in scenes taken from his life, which led him to heavenly glory. On the margins of the icon are placed small half-length figures of family saints: to the left of the spectator, above, St. Savva and below, the holy martyr Paraskeva; on the right the holy martyrs, Catherine and Barbara. The four top scenes from the life of the saint, immediately below the "order", depict his childhood and show the manifestation of Divine Grace in him from the moment of his birth. Thus the first scene depicts an incident which amazed his parents when, being washed after birth, he stood in the bath upright with no one's support. The second scene depicts his baptism; the third, the healing by the child Nicholas of a woman with a withered arm; in the fourth scene the father of the future bishop takes him to be taught his letters. Subsequent scenes depict St. Nicholas helping people in their adversities, and his death. On the left, under the scene of his birth, is his appearance in a dream to the Emperor Constantine, commanding him to release three generals who through calumny were wrongly condemned to death. Below is the scene depicting him at Myra, where he was bishop, saving three citizens who were wrongly condemned to death. On the right St. Nicholas drives demons out of a well by cutting down the adjacent tree which was dedicated to a pagan cult. Below this is the appearance of St. Nicholas to distressed mariners who had turned to him in prayer for help, and their rescue. In the left-hand bottom corner is a posthumous miracle of St. Nicholas—his rescue of a drowning man (John, the father of the holy Patriarch Methodius

mentioned above; in other icons the rescued man is Demetrius, which evidently depicts another of the saint's miracles). Next to it is another posthumous miracle—the liberation of a boy taken prisoner by Arabs, whom St. Nicholas returned to his parents on his commemoration day. The next scene depicts his death, and the last is either his burial or one of the stages of the transportation of his remains (the inscription over this scene is badly defaced so that exact definition is prevented).

The holy Bishop Nicholas himself in our icon is not the stern, ascetic and redoubtable denouncer of injustice as he is sometimes depicted, but the kind and loving father ready at any moment to come to the rescue of those who call to him.

The icon attracts one's attention both by the deep spiritual feeling with which it is painted and by its soft rich colours. The small figures of the scenes taken from his life are full of vigour and glow with rich patches of colour. (The figures of the "order" are somewhat spoiled by a later restoration). These patches, almost devoid of any elaboration, give the impression of coloured gems.

[1] St. Nicholas was born in the town of Patara in Lycia on the southern shores of Asia Minor, supposedly about 280. (Archpriest G. Debolsky: *Days of Divine Services in the Eastern Orthodox Church*, vol. 1, St. Petersburg, 1901.) He died on December 6th, according to some suppositions in 341, according to others between 345 and 352 (Sergius: Annus ecclesiasticus graeco-slavicus). His memory is celebrated on the day of his death and on May 9th to commemorate the transportation of his remains from Myra to Bari in Italy in 1087 (ibid.).

[2] Canon of Tone 3 and Sedalen of Tone 8.

[3] Menaion, Dec. 6th. The Life of St. Nicholas is supposed to have been written at least as early as the Vth century (Sergius: Annus ecclesiasticus graeco-slavicus).

[4] In 325 St. Nicholas was among the 318 fathers taking part in the First Oecumenical Council which condemned the Arian heresy.







ST. BASIL THE GREAT AND THE GREAT MARTYR ST. GEORGE[1]

See reproduction on page 123.
St. Basil and St. George, Novgorod School about 1400. Coll. Dr. Amberg, Kölliken, Switzerland

These icons are ascribed to the Novgorod School of about 1400.

The two icons reproduced here were part of the "Tchin" (order) which, as we have seen from the analysis of the iconostasis, occupies one of the chief places of importance in it. Therefore icons of that storey were as a rule larger than those of other storeys. Our icons (the first 177×64 cm, the second 177×66½ cm) evidently belonged to one of the particularly grandiose iconostases. The role of an iconostasis, designed to be embraced at one glance, helped considerably to develop simple and clear compositions, strength of colours and generalised lines which give the figures the particularly precise outline so characteristic of Russian icons. Otherwise it would have been too difficult to see and distinguish the icons, especially in large churches, at a great distance and height. The icons of St. Basil and St. George fully answer this requirement of a sharp and precise outline. Their monumental figures, beautifully inserted into the narrow panels, are strictly proportionate. The painting shows much feeling for colours which are bright and harmonious. They are painted with great vigour, lightness and freedom, without any effort. The colours are now thick, laid in solid patches, as for instance on the flame-coloured cloak of St. George, the white omophorion of St. Basil and the backgrounds, now light and transparent, with delicate high-lights, as on the under-garments and the chasuble of St. Basil; they thus create an interplay of planes and give much life to the icons. The drawing is exact and expressive. Rhythmic lines, now long, soft and flowing, now short, sharp and angular, call to one another in contrasting harmony and are thus a means of expression no less essential than the colours. The figures of the saints, almost motionless externally, are full of a special inner life. Their calm inner collectedness is rendered by the bend of the head and the stoop of the shoulders. The postures are free and natural; they tread lightly, barely touching the ground with their feet and if it were not for the high line of the



Saints celebrated in January. Design for an icon, lower half

ground their figures would appear separated from the earth and floating above it. Both icons are the work of the same master, endowed with great artistic culture and technical experience.

St. Basil the Great as a bishop, that is, a successor of the Apostles, comes in order of sequence immediately after them. St. George follows the holy ascetics and usually comes at the end of the "tchin". Judging by the direction of the figures, our icons were not placed on the side where they are seen on the iconostasis reproduced on page 64A, but on the opposite side.

St. Basil the Great is represented, as is usual for bishops, in full vestments with the attributes of his high office. Over his chasuble he has round his shoulders an omophorion with crosses "by means of which the bishop symbolises the incarnate Son of God"[2] or, according to the interpretation of St. Germanos, "The omophorion worn by a bishop signifies the lost sheep whom, having found, the Lord has put on His shoulders... It has crosses, because Christ too carried His cross on his shoulders..."[3] As a successor of the Apostles and a teacher of his Church he holds in his left hand the Gospels, while his right hand is stretched in a gesture of prayer towards Christ sitting in the centre of the "order". The figure of St. Basil is full of majestic calm. His high rounded brow bears the seal of deep concentrated thought. We have before us an image of a teacher of the Church, a great theologian, an interpreter of the mystery of the Holy Trinity.

St. George is depicted in a red cloak, traditional for a martyr, and a pale blue tunic with greenish reflections. His images are greatly varied; sometimes he is depicted on horseback, striking down a dragon (page 139), at other times as a warrior on foot. He is also depicted as a military tribune in patrician garments with a metal diadem on his head, a coat of mail under his cloak, holding a cross in his right hand and a sword in his left. But here, in the "order", neither he nor any other holy martyrs are ever, in traditional iconography, depicted in their military rank or with arms. As we have said in our analysis of the iconostasis, in so far as the "order" is an image of the normal order of the universe, the order of the life to come, it is self-evident that it can have no place for any enmity, nor therefore any arms. If St. Basil the Great is depicted in the office for which he was glorified, for his life which was his spiritual task, St. George is depicted as glorified for his death as a martyr for Christ, for his earthly office was only a way to his spiritual task.[4]

Nor are martyrs depicted in Orthodox iconography with the attributes of their martyrdom, for the important thing for the Church is not how and in what way they were martyred bur for what they were martyred.

It has to be noted at this point that icons of saints depicting their martyrdom are extremely rare (for instance, the decapitation of John the Forerunner). If they are depicted at all they are placed on the margins of the icons of the saint as a secondary or additional element. In other words, the centre of gravity in the icon as well as in the liturgic texts of the saint's day is not in the grievous character of their martyrdom, but in the joy and peace which are its fruit.

[1] St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Cesaraea in Cappadocia, Father and teacher of the Church, died in 379. His memory is celebrated on January 1st. St. George the great martyr, native of Cappadocia, was raised by Diocletian to the honorary rank of Count (*Κόμης*), and general, and was martyred at his orders in 303. His memory is celebrated on April 23rd (Menaion April 23rd).

[2] St. Simeon of Thessalonica, *Book on the Church*, c. 23.

[3] Quoted from I. Dmitrievsky, *Explanation of the Divine Liturgy*, St. Petersburg, 1897.

[4] What is said here refers only to the *Tchin* (or "order"), but not to the lower, local row of the iconostasis, where St. George and other martyrs can be depicted as warriors and as carrying arms.



THE HEAD OF
ST. GEORGE
THE MARTYR

Opposite page:
Detail of St. George

In the icons of St. Basil the Great and St. George the Martyr attention is particularly drawn to the face, both by the inner content and the manner of execution. Like the figures, the faces of the saints are painted in a very direct and precise manner. The basic greenish-brownish tone (*sankir*) is laid in light and transparent; the underlying white ground of the panel shows through here and there, and thus creates an interplay of light and shade which gives the colours depth and translucence. Over this darkish basic tone two lighter tones are subsequently laid with a thick flowing wash; the first of yellow and red ochre, the second of yellow ochre mixed with white. The final high-lights are laid with a bold and sure hand in pure white, covering and smoothing out the uneven edges of the wash. The lights on the dark hair of St. George are of golden ochre. The hair and beard of St. Basil are compact dark areas broken by a few darker strokes. The whole technique is simple, sure and powerful, reminiscent of frescoes. It is somewhat crude, but strong and precise, done with a bold sweep.

The faces of the saints are not stern. Their attraction lies in their serene "immobility"; at the same time it is hard to decide which gives a greater impression of forward movement—the body, the hands outstretched in prayer or the eyes. The faces and eyes of the saints, that is the features which express all the depth of man's spiritual life, show the complete supremacy of spirit over the flesh which characterises icons in general and particularly Russian icons. It is as it were a pictorial expression of the words of the Cherubic Hymn sung on Holy Saturday: "Let all human flesh keep silence... and lift itself above all earthly thought." The faces of both saints breathe this absence of all earthly thought in the flesh illumined by the Holy Spirit and reduced to silence. They are free of the weight of the flesh and are filled with spiritual serenity. The face of St. George is especially characteristic in this respect. It lacks nothing of what belongs to human nature; yet, when one looks at it, one seems to see not the face of a man but of an angel (see chap. 2, above p. 36). Though humanly virile, strong and endowed with a powerful will, he strikes one by his unearthly purity and tranquillity.

ST. SERGIUS OF RADONEJ

See reproduction on page 130. Russian, forties of XXth century. 10 x 12½ inches. Community of St-Denis and St-Séraphin, Paris

St. Sergius of Radonej (1314–1392) is one of the most popular Russian saints.[1] The monastery of the Holy Trinity founded by him, at present the Trinity-Sergius Lavra, is now the spiritual centre of Russia. The exceptional influence of the saint, which began during his life and never ceased, can be seen above all in the inner, spiritual life of the country, in its monastic life. St. Sergius had a multitude of followers, and the majority of monasteries founded after his death were directly or indirectly influenced by him. He was the head and the teacher of Russian hermits. The greater part of the saints in the XIVth and XVth centuries, intercessors for the land of Russia at that difficult time, were his disciples, friends or correspondents. It is worthy of note that the monastery which grew up round him is dedicated to the Holy Trinity—the prototype of that unity of which a monastery should be a concrete realisation in the world. This unity, this perfect inner peace, was attained by the saint not only with men but also with wild animals.[2] In him was re-established in practice that normal order of the universe where the whole of nature, united round man, obeys God. The monastery of St. Sergius which became the home of Russian sainthood at that period of its flowering, was also the home of iconography. The greatest iconographer, St. Andrew (Rublev) seems to have studied his art there and painted for it his famous icon of the Trinity. One of the first icons of St. Sergius was painted by his nephew, St. Theodore the Archbishop of Rostov, a former monk of the Trinity monastery.

The great influence of St. Sergius affected not only the internal but also the external life of the country—its unification and its defence against external enemies. He gave his blessing to Prince Dimitry of Don for his battle with the Tartars and predicted his victory which began the liberation of Russia from them. At the same time the most striking feature of St. Sergius' life is his exceptional humility. To relieve his brethren he undertook the most lowly tasks in his monastery, wore threadbare, patched clothes, so that people who met him failed to recognise in him the renowned abbot of Radonej, whose fame spread throughout the land. He shared his meagre portion of bread, which was his only food, with a wild bear which came to him from the forest; if there was not enough bread for the two of them, he used to give his share to the bear. To the reproaches of the brethren he answered that "the beast does not understand about fasting".

The icon reproduced here conveys perfectly this humility and inconspicuousness. It has been painted in our times in the Trinity-Sergius Lavra itself. St. Sergius is depicted in a brown cloak with subdued dark-blue lights, a pale blue "schema" with crosses and a white undercassock. These hues, together with the ivory background, give a modest, very pleasant and restful harmony of colours. In spite of the absence of vividness and power, in spite even of a certain timidity, this icon strikes one by its strict uncompromising adherence to the Canon. It is a concrete proof of the existence of a living uninterrupted tradition, manifested not only in the external adherence to the iconographic Canon but also in the spiritual penetration into the inner image of the saint, in transmitting this inconspicuousness and humility which distinguished St. Sergius in life.

[1] The memory of St. Sergius is celebrated on the day of his death, September 25th, and on the day of the recovery of his remains, July 5th.

[2] Their relations with wild animals is a characteristic feature of the lives of a great number of Orthodox saints, and the meaning of these relations is everywhere the same. St. Sergius' disciple, Epiphanius, who wrote his life, remarks in speaking of the obedience of wild animals to the saint: "And that should astonish no one, for it should be known with certainty that when God dwells in a man and the Holy Spirit rests in him, all is subject to him, as all was subject in the beginning to Adam, before the transgression of God's commandment..."

ST. SIMEON STYLITES

See reproduction on page 131.
Russian, XVIth century, National Museum, Paris

Stylitism is a form of ascetic life which was started in Syria in the first half of the Vth century. It consists in remaining upright or kneeling on the top of a column or pillar (*στύλος*), on which was constructed a narrow roofless habitation. The stylite lived there, never able to lie at full length, under sun and rain, exposed to the sight of all men. The food of the stylite was taken up by ladder. The extraordinary life of the founder of stylitism, St. Simeon Stylites, filled his contemporaries with astonishment and admiration. The celebrated Theodoret, bishop of Cyrus, who was able to see St. Simeon and converse with him, wrote his life during his lifetime.[1] He himself says that the facts that he recounts are scarcely credible and adds finally: "If his life is prolonged, others after us will recount other marvellous feats."[2] Another life was written by the monk Antony, disciple of St. Simeon.[3]

St. Simeon, born about 389 in Syria, after having led a life of extremely austere asceticism in a monastery, then in solitude, shut himself in an enclosure where he remained standing, fasting and praying. The glory of his sanctity, the cures and other benefits that he obtained by his prayers, drew crowds of pilgrims to him. It was to preserve his solitude and his peace in prayer, without giving up providing for the needs of his disciples and his innumerable visitors, that he wished to ascend a column, where he remained upright for thirty-seven years, till his death in 459.

Pilgrims came to Tellneŝin, near Antioch, from all countries. Theodoret relates that a pilgrim, who had come from Ravenna, was unwilling to believe that Simeon was a human being; so, to prove that he was not an angelic spirit, St. Simeon had a ladder brought, and the pilgrim, having climbed to the top of the column, was able to touch the horrible sores on the stylite's feet. A life of St. Genoveva, written shortly after her death (at the beginning of the VIth century), recounts how St. Simeon sent a message to the saint, by merchants who were travelling to Gaul.[4] St. Simeon exercised an extraordinary spiritual authority. From his column he taught the crowds twice a day, he fought heresies, addressed messages to bishops and emperors. His feast is celebrated on September 1st.

Our icon (Russian XVIth century) represents St. Simeon on his column. It is a kind of tower with a door and stairs inside. St. Simeon is standing at the top of the column, behind a small balustrade. He is wearing over his yellow cassock, "the habit of the great schema of monkhood" (*τὸ μέγα σχῆμα*), a brown cloak and dark blue hood. He gives the blessing with his right hand and holds a scroll in his left. His face is framed with a beard.

[1] Philotheos Historia, c. XXVI; P.G. 82, coll. 1464–1484.

[2] Col. 1484 BC.

[3] Edited by M. Lietzmann, *Das Leben des hl. Symeons Stylites* (Leipzig, 1908). See the study by H. Delahaye, *Les Saints Stylites*, Brussels, 1923.

[4] M.G.H., SS. rerum Merov. III, 226 c. 27.





ST. MACARIUS OF UNSHA AND YELLOW WATERS

See reproduction on page 134. Russian, XVIIth century. 14¼ x 17 inches. Coll. Dr. Amberg, Kölliken, Switzerland

St. Macarius, the founder of three monasteries, is better known in hagiology under the name "of Yellow Waters"[1], for it was on Yellow Waters Lake that he was prior of the second monastery he founded in the name of the Holy Life-giving Trinity. In 1432 this monastery was completely destroyed by the Tartars. St. Macarius then settled by the river Unsha, a tributary of the Volga, where he founded his third monastery. He died in 1444. Both in life and after death St. Macarius received great popularity and veneration. His icons existed long before his official celebration, which began in 1619 when July 25th was established as the day of his commemoration. The characteristic feature of the saint, who sought solitude all his life, was his acceptance of the task of caring for the people who were wont to gather round him and seek his protection. In accordance with the "Manual of Iconography", he is usually depicted holding in his hand a scroll with a prayer to Christ about giving people daily bread, both for the body and the soul. Thus this icon represents the saint's prayer, the fatherly care of the prior for his children. In the top righthand corner of the icon there is the Saviour, blessing the saint and the monastery in answer to his prayer. In the foreground is the river encircling the monastery. Like the world of vanity, it surrounds this blessed place where love is practised in the image of the Holy Trinity, a healthy island in a sick world—the idea of a monastery in Orthodox consciousness. The buildings of the monastery, tiny compared with the figure of the saint, may look naive to a western man. Yet they correspond exactly to the meaning of the icon and would have been depicted in exactly the same way by a modern icon-painter. This meaning lies in the fact that here the centre of gravity is not in the result of the saint's earthly activity, not in the monastery he had founded, but in the crowning of his whole earthly journey, in his sanctity. The icon clearly opposes the outer to the more important inner work of construction. Glorified by the gift of miracles, the saint —an animate temple not made with human hands—is at it were opposed here in his significance to the monastery with its inanimate temple made with human hands, which is only a way to the aim which the saint has achieved by his strivings within its walls. St. Macarius, in monk's habit, stands outside the walls of the monastery he founded, no longer as its inmate and prior, but as its heavenly protector who prays for it. His guardianship and care do not cease with his death—they only pass to another plane.

If we compare this icon with earlier icons we shall see that despite its conformity with the Canon of iconography, and its undoubtedly great spirituality and warmth, there is clearly felt, especially in the figures of the Saviour and the saint, a certain spiritual weakness, a certain absence of vigour in the form and execution, which are characteristic of many icons of that period. At the same time the construction of the icon is masterly: the blessing Saviour, depicted in the clouds, balances to perfection the figure of the saint.

The architecture of the monastery is evidently taken from life and is contemporary not with the saint but with the painter. It is quite possible that it portrays the new monastery built in the XVIIth century at Yellow Waters in the place of the old monastery destroyed by the Tartars.

[1] Sergius, Annus ecclesiasticus graeco-slavicus, vol. II.

ST. DEMETRIUS OF THESSALONICA

See reproduction on page 135.
See reproduction on page 135.

Greek, ca. mid. XVth century
14 1/3 x 26 inches.
Benaki Museum, Athens

Saint Demetrius of Thessalonica, the "Great Martyr" (*μεγαλομάρτυς*) with Saint George, Saint Theodore the Stratelate, Saint Theodore the Tiron, and some others, belongs to the number of warrior martyrs. If on the tier of the iconostasis these holy martyrs appear clothed simply in tunics and himations, without arms, as is fitting for witnesses of Christ, on other icons offered for the veneration of the faithful they are represented in the garb corresponding to the career which they exercised during their life, that is to say armed and sometimes on horseback. The Church has never considered the condition of soldier as incompatible with the quality of a Christian. Christianity is not a social or political doctrine: its action on the external world is exercised in a realm deeper than that of human institutions. The peace to which it aspires and the war that it preaches have nothing to do with "pacifism" or "militarism". If, following the example of Christ (Matt. xxvi, 51–54), the Church never wished to be defended by the secular sword, it has never been opposed to a Christian embracing the career of arms, to defend the values here below, sacrificing his life in the service of the common cause. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv, 13). This sentence of the Gospels can be applied to what is most noble in the condition of a soldier. The Church commemorates, on August 29th, all Christian soldiers fallen on fields of battle.

Saint Demetrius suffered martyrdom at the beginning of the IVth century during the persecution by Diocletian. According to the story of his passion, Maximianus is said to have named the young Demetrius to the position of anthypate (proconsul) not knowing that he was Christian. Instead of obeying the order to exterminate all the Christians in Thessalonica, Demetrius did his best to preach the Gospel. Arrested and thrown into prison, he exhorted the young Nestor, his friend, to fight in single combat against a gladiator who was killing Christians in the arenas by throwing them on lances. After the victory and martyrdom of Nestor, Demetrius was pierced with lances in prison by order of Maximianus. His feast is celebrated on October 26th.

The Greek icon of Saint Demetrius reproduced here is of the middle of the XVth century.[1] Saint Demetrius is represented full face, on foot. His very short tunic does not reach his knees and allows one to see his legs with crossed bindings. Over the tunic he wears a cuirass, and a small cross with eight branches in the middle of his breast. A cloak is thrown over his shoulders. His helmet is hanging on the left shoulder. Armed with a lance which he holds in his right hand, Saint Demetrius has his left hand placed on a richly ornate buckler. A high cross (added later) behind the buckler, must represent the true arm, which rendered the martyr intrepid at the hour of his death.

[1] According to A. Xyggopoulos, Catalogue of the icons of the Benaki Museum, Athens, 1936, p. 10.





THE GREAT MARTYR ST. PARASKEVA PIATNITZA

See reproduction on page 138.
Russian, second half of XVIth century.[1]
10½ x 12½ inches
Private coll., Paris

The great martyr St. Paraskeva, native of Iconia (Asia Minor), was martyred during the persecutions of Diocletian.[2] Her memory is celebrated on October 28th. To the Greek name Paraskeva, given her at baptism in honour of the day of the week dedicated to our Lord's Passion, is added its translation in Russian, Piatnitza—Friday. The use of this translation added to the name serves as a reminder of its meaning and its connection with the achievement of its bearer. St. Paraskeva has been specially venerated among the Slavs since ancient times. She is regarded as the patron of the work of women and, evidently because Friday was market day, a patron of trade.

The characteristic feature of St. Paraskeva is her bold preaching of Christianity. Even during questioning when she was asked her name, instead of a direct answer she began to profess Christ. When she was asked why she would not tell her name, she replied: "It was necessary first to give the name of eternal life, and only then the name of temporary existence."[3]

One must enter very deeply into the essence of the achievement of the saint to give the impression of its meaning and the character of the martyr herself, as has been done in our icon. The characteristic feature of the saint, mentioned earlier, is expressed here with great force not only by external attributes but by her whole presence. The gesture with which she holds the cross in her upraised hand, the austere and concentrated expression of the face express the daring and unyielding firmness with which she preached and endured her tortures. The face and the whole figure of St. Paraskeva breathes that calm and firm faith which neither tortures nor the sword could break. It is a typical icon of a martyr-confessor, that is a person who crowned her life by the act of confession of truth, sealed with her blood. The saint is represented in the traditional red cloak, the symbol of martyrdom and a deep blue dress. In her right hand she holds the inevitable attribute of martyrdom, the weapon of her victory—the cross, symbol of following after the passion of Christ, and in the left an open scroll on which is written the Symbol of Faith. Each alike is an expression, by image and by word, of the truth for the sake of which she suffered. On her head, over a white cloth, the symbol of virginity, she wears a patrician diadem with precious stones. Two angels, one in a red, the other in a dark-blue cloak, hold above her head a golden crown—the crown of martyrdom—the response to her witness of the witness of Christ "Be ye my witnesses, and I too am a witness".[3] Simple strong colours emphasise and strengthen the inner content of the image. The fine execution of the cloak and dress, so characteristic of the XVIth century and done here with pure white, somewhat dulls the vividness of the red, but blends it well with the ivory white of the head-cloth and the scroll. These colours, together with the gold and the deep golden ochres of the face and background create a scale that is strong and calm.

The first paremia of the service of the saint, Isaiah xliii, 10

[1] The icon was cleaned in 1945. One can judge its state before cleaning by the square left on the right-hand bottom margin. This icon is comparatively rare even for the XVIth century, as having not been touched up either before it was cleaned or since.

[2] Sergius, Annus ecclesiasticus graeco-slavicus, vol. II, part I.

[3] Life of St. Paraskeva in the Menaion for October.

THE GREAT MARTYR ST. GEORGE AND THE DRAGON

See reproduction on page 139. Novgorod school, XVth century. 19 x 26½ inches. Coll. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

St. George (*γεωργός*—husbandman) is venerated as "the deliverer of prisoners and protector of the poor"[1], as well as the patron of agriculture, of herds, flocks and shepherds to whom, according to tradition, he gave help during his life and after death. This veneration, connected with the daily interests of husbandmen, is evidently the cause of his varied iconography (see the analysis of his icon, page 126) and the great number of his icons. In particular St. George the Victorious, striking down the dragon, is one of the most popular subjects in Orthodox icon-painting, especially in that of Novgorod. This icon depicts a posthumous miracle of St. George taken from the record of his life. The record relates that in a lake in Lybia there lived a terrible dragon, which the local inhabitants, who were pagans, worshipped as a deity and propitiated by giving him their children, one after another. When the turn came for the daughter of the local king, Elisaba or Elizabeth as she is called in icons[2], to be thus sacrificed and she was awaiting her terrible death, St. George appeared on a white horse and with the words "in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit" charged the dragon, brandishing his lance, and having struck him with great force through his mouth pinned him to the ground, while his horse trampled him under its hoofs. Then St. George commanded the maiden to bind the dragon with her belt and lead him like a tame dog to the town... And St. George slew the dragon with his sword in the town.[3]

Some icons, especially later examples, depict this miracle in all detail, with princess Elisaba, the town and the princess' parents and citizens looking on from the walls, and so forth. There exist also representations of the final moment of the miracle, that is, the striking down of the beast by the sword, as well as images of St. George on horseback, without the dragon.[4]

In other icons, as in that reproduced here, the descriptive moment is reduced only to the essentials. This icon represents in this sense a characteristic example of the Novgorod school of the XVth century. Its composition has the simplicity and clarity of that period. All secondary details are omitted. Only the principal moment is shown—victory, that is, the very meaning of the miracle. St. George is depicted in the rich armour and accoutrement of a Roman military commander, with shield and lance. His short figure, typical of XVth century Novgorod, seated on a stumpy horse is full of irresistible strength. The image has an extraordinary inner impetus and dramatic quality. The folds of the cloak, almost repeating in their outline the outline of the hills, create the impression that the rider has just torn himself off the mountain and in his headlong descent not only strikes with his lance but precipitates himself on the dragon with the whole weight of himself and his horse.

The blessing hand emerging from a segment of a circle at the top right-hand corner of the icon, with the inscription "Jesus Christ"[5], as well as the saint's lance surmounted with a cross, show that he gains victory not with his own power, but through God's help and the power of the cross. The rider submits to this power, and so does the horse through him. This is why the horse is often depicted with its head turned round, looking at the rider. According to the life of the saint he appeared radiating an indescribable light. This light is usually represented symbolically by the white colour of the horse which, according to the interpretation of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, signifies the greatest possible proximity to the Divine Light.[6] Indicating that the saint belongs to another plane of being, it is at the same time a personification of victory, for the rider of the white horse "went forth conquering, and to conquer" (Rev. vi, 2). St. George was a conqueror of his tormentors in a greater measure than other martyrs, for seeing his sufferings many of them became converted to Christ. And here too, in this posthumous miracle, by conquering the dragon and freeing men from it, he by this very fact liberates them from paganism. For this reason there is often shown an angel descending from heaven and holding a crown over him—the crown of martyrdom and victory.

[1] The Service consecrated to the Saint.

[2] "The name Elisaba, or Elizabeth, is nowhere found in legends; this is an example and an indication of the fact that the art of iconography knew traditions outside written sources." (N. P. Kondakov, *The Russian Icon*, Part 1, 3, p. 135. In Russian.)





[3] Life of the saint, Menaion, April 23rd.

[4] Moreover, many icons, for instance the Greek and the Coptic, simultaneously depict another miracle of St. George, also posthumous (or rather one of three similar miracles)—the miracle, in answer to the prayers of his parents, of the liberation of a boy taken prisoner by Saracens. The event is depicted in accordance with the boy's tale: "I had filled that glass with wine to serve to the prince when I was carried off by a radiant man on horseback, who lifted me up on his horse; I held the glass in one hand and clung to his belt with the other, and so found myself here...," that is, in his parents' house on the feast day of St. George (Life, ibid.).

[5] Sometimes the Saviour Himself is depicted here.

[6] St. Dionysius the Areopagite. The Celestial Hierarchy, c. 15, par. 8.

THE HOLY PROPHET ELIJAH IN THE DESERT[1]

See reproduction on page 142. Russian, end XVth century, Novgorod school, Icon Museum, Recklinghausen

Considering that the principle of the icon is to portray only the fundamental, it seems strange at first sight that a special iconographic theme should be made of the episode when the Prophet Elijah, hiding in the desert, was fed by ravens (3 Kings xvii, 3–6). Yet, side by side with other images of this prophet, this subject is very popular in Orthodox and specially in Russian iconography.

The name Elijah, translated from the Hebrew, means "strength of the Lord"; and this is how the Bible describes him: a strict ascetic, full of zeal for faith in the true God, aflame with the fire of love for Him, a daring preacher; in appearance "a hairy man" (4 Kings i, 8). As such he is depicted also in Orthodox iconography. The character of the prophet, portrayed in image and colours, is often emphasised (for instance in the "tchin") by the words of the prophet himself written on an open scroll, "I have been very jealous for the Lord Almighty" (3 Kings xix, 10, 14). The Prophet Elijah, the most awe-inspiring and powerful of the Old Testament prophets, who was given power over the elements, who closed the heavens (3 Kings xvii, 1) and opened them (3 Kings xviii, 45) is especially venerated by men most firmly bound to nature—by husbandmen. Because of this power over elements and in particular over fire, he is also regarded as a protector against fire. The inner fire of his zeal for God was manifested in the appearance of visible fire: by the force of his prayer he many times brought fire from heaven (3 Kings xviii, 37–38; 4 Kings i, 10–12), and was taken alive to heaven in a chariot of fire (4 Kings ii, 11). Orthodox iconography particularly emphasises this connection of Elijah with fire. For instance, a very wide-spread image is that of his ascent to heaven in a chariot of fire drawn by horses of fire led by an angel. This connection is underlined also in his half-length images, for instance in the remarkable Novgorod icon of the XIVth century in the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow, where the powerful inner fire of his eyes is emphasised by the flame-red background of the icon.

Our icon represents the Old Testament saint as one of those "Of whom the world was not worthy: they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth" (Heb. xi, 38). The powerful figure of the prophet, his head covered with a shaggy tousled mane, his manly face with a lofty brow are full of invincible strength. In his left hand is the usual attribute of a prophet—a scroll. With calm confidence he welcomes and contemplates the appearance of the raven bringing him heavenly gifts, and stretches out his right hand to receive them. This scene reveals the whole significance of this seemingly incidental moment in the life of the prophet, when in answer to his burning love of God the natural order of things is changed by the Divine Will. St. Basil the Great gives the following interpretation of this moment: "The dwelling place of Elijah was Mount Carmel, a high uninhabited mountain. The wilderness received the hermit; but it was the soul that constituted all for this righteous man and the provision for his life's journey was hope in God. Yet despite this mode of life he did not die of hunger; on the contrary, the most rapacious birds of prey brought him food. Those whose custom was to steal food of others became servants at his table. At the command of the Lord they changed their nature and became faithful

guardians of bread and meat."[2] This moment of the prophet's service anticipated the revelation later given him on Mount Horeb of the manifestation of God in the world: "Behold, the Lord will pass by. And, behold, a great and strong wind rending the mountains, and crushing the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire: and after the fire the voice of a gentle breeze" and the Lord was there (3 Kings xix, 11-12). This prophecy, representing a prefiguration of the Kingdom of God is read on the day of the revelation of this Kingdom, manifested by the Lord in His Transfiguration on Mount Tabor (see analysis of the icon of the Transfiguration, p. 209). The icon depicting the Prophet Elijah fed by the raven, showing the very laws of nature changed by the will of God, is in itself a prophetic prefiguration of the coming of that Kingdom in power. Clearly the reason for its popularity lies in this significance.

The figure of the prophet, somewhat large and bulky for the panel of our icon, his calm posture and movement are as it were an external expression of his strength and spiritual power. The details, distributed with great artistic skill and sensitivity, give a fine balance to the composition of this beautiful image.

[1] The memory of Prophet Elijah is celebrated on July 20th.
[2] Discourse 8; P.G. 31, coll. 317D-320A.

COLLECTIVE ICONS

See reproduction on page 143. Russian, end XVth century,[1] *Novgorod school [?]. 21½ x 27½ inches. Icon Museum, Recklinghausen*

Collective icons, in which several saints are grouped together, are represented above all by the menologies. These are icons which bring together, in several rows, saints and festivals of the liturgical month, according to the order of the calendar. The type of menologic icons was created at Byzantium about the time of Basil II (963-1025).

Our icon (Russian XVIth century) closely resembles the type of the menology. It is composed of four rows, of which the first contains four icons of feasts, whilst the three others bring together various saints, shown standing. None the less, the principle according to which the images of the feasts and of the saints were united on this icon is not that of a menology. The festivals of the first row do not belong to a single month: one sees there the Annunciation (March 25th), the Nativity of Christ (December 25th), the Descent into Hell (Easter) and the Conception of Saint Anne (December 9th). In the three other rows, the saints celebrated at different epochs of the year are found represented side by side. Thus in the second row, we see the Archangel Michael (November 8th), beside the holy Princes Boris and Gleb (August 24th), followed by Saints Constantine and Helen (May 21st). In the third row, Saint Simeon Stylites (September 1st) stands beside Saint Simeon and Saint Anne (February 3rd): here the iconographer was no doubt guided by the similarity of names. Finally, among the saints of the last row one finds Saint Mary of Egypt (April 1st) and Saint Nicholas (December 6th and May 9th). Nor is it an icon of the principal saints of the year: for if that were so, one would not understand why the Conception of Saint Anne figures in it with the three great festivals. Therefore, the choice of festivals and of saints was dictated by other motives, according to the wish of whoever ordered the icon. In all probability, it is a family icon in which different feasts and saints correspond to an individual devotion.

[1] Catalogue of the Icon Museum, Recklinghausen.



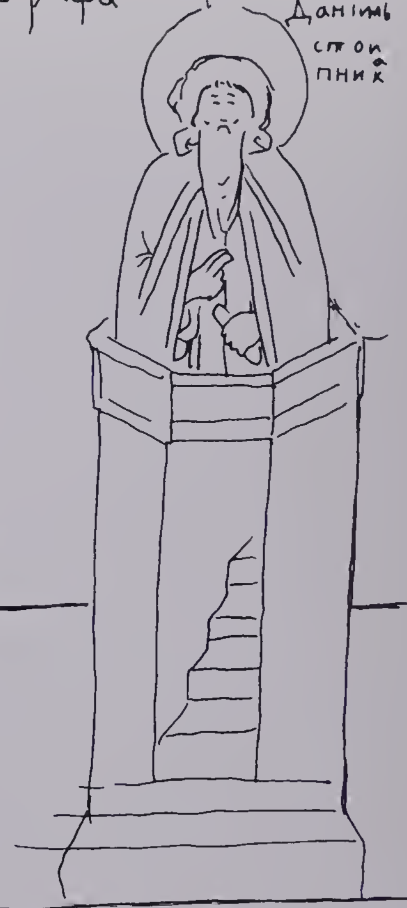


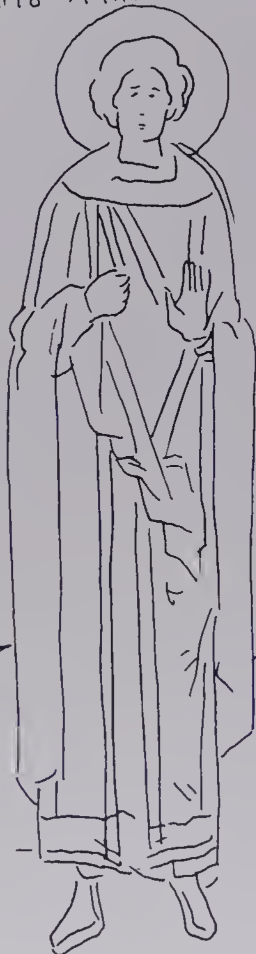



Below:
Saints celebrated on 11th and 16th December. Design for an icon













THE PRINCIPAL FESTIVALS

We now briefly analyse some icons of Church festivals. These are first of all the icons of the greatest festival of all—Easter (Descent into Hell and the Spice-bearers at the Sepulchre) and the icons of the twelve principal festivals, six of the Lord and four of the Mother of God (see the analysis of the Iconostasis, p. 63), the Pentecost and the Elevation of the Cross. Besides these, amongst the icons of the principal festivals we have placed icons of other, less important festivals, such as: the Raising of Lazarus, the Protection of the Mother of God, Mid-Pentecost and two icons of the Crucifixion—one painted and one carved (a Cross). The icons of festivals, arranged to follow the sequence of the Church year, are put in the following order: Birth of the Holy Virgin, Raising of the Cross, Protection of the Mother of God, Presentation of the Holy Virgin in the Temple, Nativity of our Lord, Baptism, Presentation of Christ, Annunciation, Raising of Lazarus, Entry into Jerusalem, Crucifixion, Descent into Hell, Spice-bearers at the Sepulchre, Mid-Pentecost, Ascension, Pentecost, Holy Trinity, Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, Transfiguration of our Lord, Dormition.

In the choice of icons commented on here, whether they be icons of festivals, of Our Lord, of the Virgin or of saints, we have been guided less by their artistic quality than by the orthodoxy of their iconography. In other words, the icons reproduced here show no trace of any dogmatic deformation, no borrowing from western art, and they transmit the unaltered teaching of the Orthodox Church, in no way infringing the Canon of iconography.

THE BIRTH OF THE HOLY VIRGIN

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 4

"Thy Birth, O Mother of God and Virgin, brought tidings of joy to the whole universe: for the Sun of Justice, Christ our God, has shone forth from Thee..." (Troparion, Tone 4).

In the festival of the Nativity of the Mother of God (September 8th), the Church celebrates the most holy human birth, whose "fruit most pure" was elect and sanctified from the moment of conception (Conception of St. Anna, celebrated December 9th). Whilst the Conception and the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, equally festivals of the Church, are given a detailed account in the Gospels, the latter say nothing of the birth of the Mother of God. Apocryphal sources, on the contrary, give a substantial share to the origins and childhood of the Holy Virgin. There is, above all, the Protevangelium Jacobi of judaeo-christian origin, a composite work, in which the part concerning the Virgin Mary goes back to the date 130–140. The venerable antiquity of this source allows the acceptance of the veracity of certain particulars that it gives about the family of the Mother of God: the names of Her parents, Joachim and Anna, the descent of Joachim from David, etc. Later modifications of the primitive account of the Protevangelium Jacobi, as well as some other more recent apocrypha, have accumulated new details, giving rise to discordant traditions. Also certain writers give Nazareth, the homeland of Joachim[1], as the Holy Virgin's birthplace, others Bethlehem, the birthplace of St. Anna[2], others again, Jerusalem.[3] The tradition of the Church has retained only such data as would throw into relief the scriptural and dogmatic truth:

the descent from the race of David and the holy birth of the Virgin, chosen to give human nature to the Word of God. The festival of the Nativity of the Holy Virgin must be very ancient: it is known that Justinian erected at Constantinople a church dedicated to St. Anna.[4]

Like the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the birth of the Mother of God, promised by an angel after the parents had long been sterile, finds Old Testament antecedents which are habitually considered as prefigurations of the Resurrection.[5] But the Nativity of the Mother of God is more than a figure; for in the person of St. Anna—a woman freed from her sterility to bring into the world a Virgin who would give birth to God incarnate—it is our nature which ceases to be sterile in order to start bearing the fruits of grace. The miraculous birth of the Holy Virgin is not due to an arbitrary action of God, entering in to break historical continuity: it is a stage of the Providence which watches over the safety of the world, arduously preparing the Incarnation of the Word, a stage which precedes the last decisive act—the Annunciation, when the chosen Virgin will assent to be "the King's Palace, in which is accomplished the perfect mystery of the two natures reunited in Christ". "Mystery goes before greater mystery": "the sterile door is opened and the virginal Door comes forth" to "introduce Christ into the world". If "the name, Mother of God (*θεοτόκος*), contains the whole history of the divine economy in the world"[6], the ancestor of the Virgin—this "Flower of Jesse"—could be called "David, the Father of God" (*θεοπάτωρ*) and the name of "parents of God" (*θεοπατόρες*) would belong, in the first place, to Joachim and Anna. Adam and Eve, parents of fallen humanity, would then rejoice to see their descendants produce "the Mother of Life", "the Source of incorruption".

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 6

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 8

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 6

Vespers, Stich. of Tones 1 and 8

The iconography of the Nativity of the Mother of God habitually shows us St. Anna half lying on a bed, surrounded by servants getting ready to wash the newly-born Infant. The Holy Virgin is generally represented in swaddling clothes, in the arms of a midwife seated on a stool near the basin filled with water. The position and the attitude of St. Joachim allow of several variations: sometimes he is shown standing, sometimes, as in our icon, seated and conversing with St. Anna. On the mosaic of the monastery of Daphni (XIth century) St. Joachim is not represented.

The icon reproduced here was painted in Paris about 1948 by a Russian iconographer. The lengthened figures of Joachim and Anna, placed face to face, emphasize their majestic character as "theopatores". St. Anna is looking downwards, towards her Daughter held by a seated midwife. The midwife and the three other servants, of reduced height, play the part of accessories: attention is fixed on the Holy Parents and their Child, who has just been born.

Opposite page: The Nativity of the Holy Virgin. 7½ × 9¾ inches. Holy Trinity Church, Vanves (Paris) Russian XXth century

[1] Epiphanius the Monk, Sermon on the life of the Mother of God. P.G. 120, col. 189.

[2] St. John Chrysostom, Christmas Homily (Anno 396); P.G. 49, col. 354; St. Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the prophet Micah, V; P.G. 71, col. 713.

[3] St. Sophronios, Odes of Anacreon, XX; P.G. 87, col. 3821.

[4] Procopius, De aedificiis, I. 3; Bonn, edition, III, p. 185.

[5] Above all, the giving birth to Isaac by the sterile Sarah has often been given this interpretation.

[6] St. John Damascene, *On the Orthodox Faith*, III, 12; P.G. 94, coll. 1029–32.



THE RAISING OF THE CROSS

Apart from Good Friday (see the icon of the Crucifixion), the theme of the Cross recurs constantly in the offices of the weekly cycle, every Wednesday and Friday of the Liturgical year. Further, the Orthodox East has devoted to the Lord's Cross three special festivals: the Adoration (προσκύνησις, third Sunday of Lent), the Procession (πρόοδος, August 1st) and the Raising (ὕψωσις) of the Holy Cross, celebrated on September 14th in the West as well as in the East.

The festival of the Raising of the Cross originated in Palestine. Instituted to commemorate the dedication of the basilica of the Resurrection, erected by Constantine in Jerusalem, the "festival of the Dedication" (τὰ εγκαίνια) was soon associated with the commemoration of the discovery of the true Cross. Eusebius, describing the dedication ceremony which took place in 335, says nothing of the discovery of the Cross. But St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in 347, says this: "Already the whole universe is filled with fragments of the Wood of the Cross."[1] Thus the finding of the Cross must have taken place shortly after the Dedication, around the year 340. The legend of Edessa sought to attribute the discovery of the Cross to Protinicia, wife of the vice-emperor Claudius, in the reign of Tiberius. But the more likely account of the discovery of the Cross by St. Helen, Constantine's mother, was to be universally accepted towards the end of the IVth century. Thus St. John Chrysostom[2], in 395, speaks of the three crosses discovered by the Empress Helen beneath the mound of Golgotha: that of Christ was identified because it was found in the middle and bore the inscription. About the beginning of the Vth century other writers[3] speak of miracles thanks to which the true Cross was recognised by St. Helen and St. Macarius, bishop of Jerusalem. Aetheria, in her account of her journey to Jerusalem (about 400) says that the festival of the Dedication was celebrated with great solemnity "because the Cross of the Lord was discovered on that day."[4]

The festival of the Cross was soon to eclipse almost wholly that of the Dedication. In the VIth century, Alexander the Monk speaks of the annual celebration, on September 14th, of the Dedication and of the Elevation of the venerable Cross—ὕψωσις τοῦ τιμίου σταυροῦ[5]. The Basilian menology (ms. of the end of the Xth century) recounts that the day following the Dedication, in 335, the people were admitted for the first time to the contemplation of the sacred wood: the bishop, standing on a height, raised the Cross, to the cries of the faithful, "Kyrie eleison". It is the picture of the ceremony of the ὕψωσις, as it must have been practised at Jerusalem since the discovery of the Cross. On September 14th, 614, this rite was performed for the first time in Constantinople.[6] Reconquered from the Persians by the Emperor Heraclius III, the Cross was to be received in triumph at the capital of the Empire, in 628. It was to be brought there finally in 633: the Patriarch Sergius carried it in procession from Blachernes to St. Sophia, where the ceremony of the Raising was celebrated with great pomp.[7] From Constantinople the festival spread to other centres of the Christian *οἰκουμένη*. It was to be celebrated at Rome under Pope Sergius (687–701).

The festival of the Raising is a glorification of the Cross of Christ by the totality of the universe which recognises that "the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. i, 25). "Seeing the Cross raised by the hands of the bishop", the Church glorifies the weapon of Christ by which "the curse was abolished, incorruptible life flowered again, earthly creatures have acquired deification and the demon has been decisively overthrown". But at the same time as the work of redemption, the Church also celebrates the "invincible victory" of the Cross over the powers of this world hostile to Christianity. In fact, for Christians there is no other means of victory except by the Cross of the Lord, which is the unique sure support in the history of the world—"the upholder of the universe". The Empire which wishes to be Christian must then bow down before the Cross: it was the Cross which assured the victory of Constantine; it was the Cross again which broke the power of the "barbarian peoples" and upheld the sceptres of the Christian Kings. The presence of these "Constantinian" elements gives the festival its political note: the Orthodox people and their *basileus*, the head of Christian civilisation,

Vespers, stich. of Tone 5

Vespers, stich. of Tones 2 and 4

Matins, Tone 8

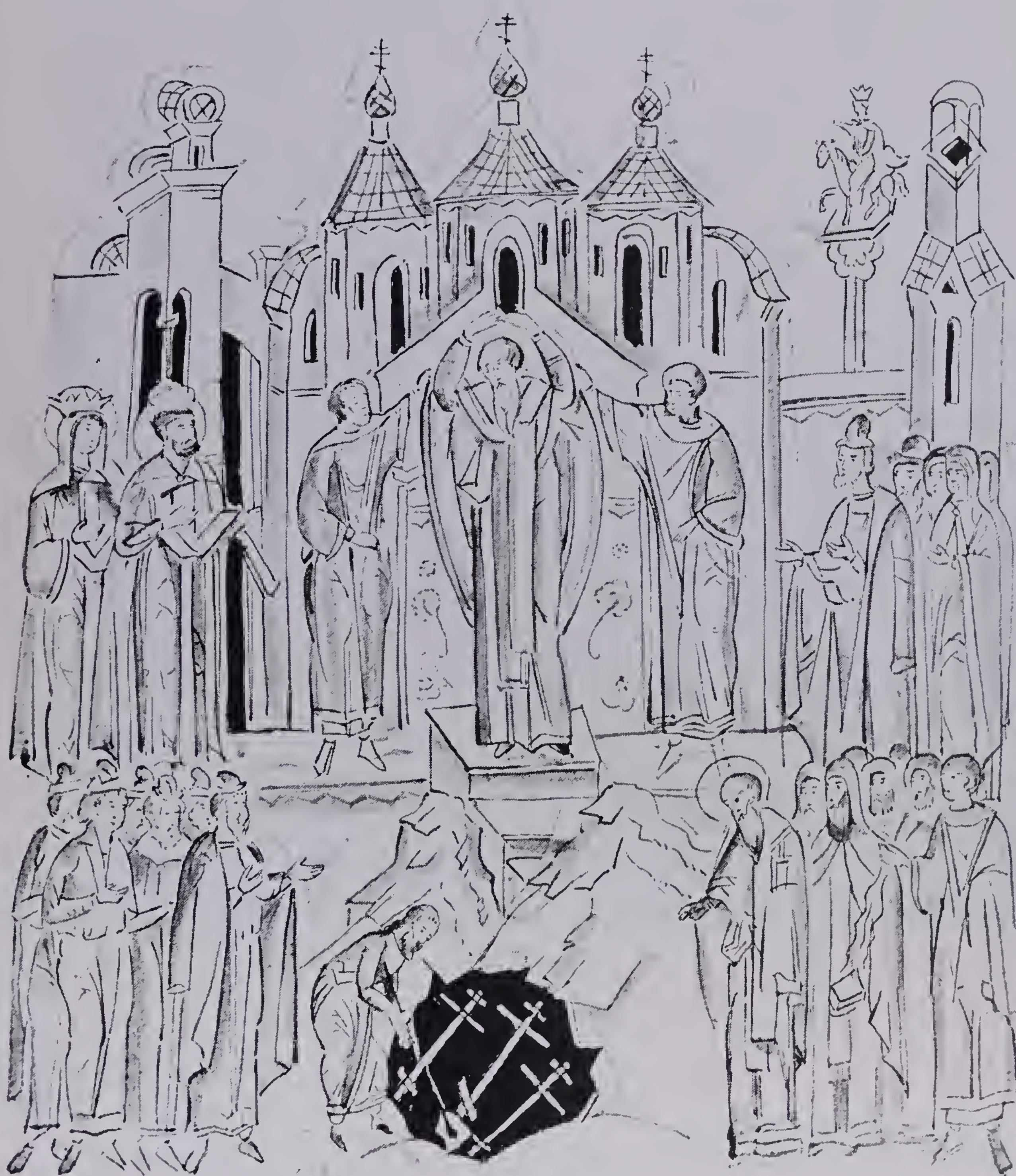
triumph over their enemies by the invincible power of the Cross. But apart from this contingent aspect, belonging to Byzantium, the universal (παγκόσμιος) Elevation of the venerable and lifegiving Cross has a permanent and essential aspect: that of a cosmic sanctification by the Divine force manifested in the Cross. If Christ is the New Adam, His Cross is the New Tree of Life, giving back to the fallen world the incorruptibility of Paradise. Raised above the earth the Cross, which embraces the whole of heaven with its two extremities, puts to flight the demons and pours forth grace to the four corners of the universe.

Kontakion, Tone 4

Matins,
Stich. of Tone 8;
Canon, Tone 6

In iconography one sometimes finds the representation of the Elevation of the Cross associated with that of its Discovery. Then the bishop is seen raising the Cross in the upper part of the icon, whilst below, St. Helen is shown near a cave at the foot of Golgotha before the three crosses that she has just discovered. But generally the subject is limited to the Elevation properly speaking. The simplest composition shows us the bishop (St. Macarius of Jerusalem) standing on an ambo holding a large cross in his two hands: it is the true Cross of

See reproduction on page 150.
Elevation of the Cross Icon of Russian iconographer, Paris, 1948. 7½ x 9¾ inches. Holy Trinity Church, Vanves (Paris)



Preliminary design



the Lord which he is showing to the people. The bishop is supported on either side by sub-deacons. Generally, one sees at his side St. Constantine and St. Helen. Sometimes the emperor and his mother are placed together to the right of the bishop, whilst to his left is shown some miracle (the healing of a sick or the resurrection of a dead person) produced by the virtue of the Cross.

The architectural background behind the bishop elevating the Cross must represent the basilica of the Resurrection built by Constantine: it is the memory of the ancient "festival of dedication" preserved in the iconography.

[1] Catechism, IV, 10; P.G. 33, col. 469.

[2] On St. John, Homily 85, 1; P.G. 59, col. 461.

[3] Rufinus, Hist. eccl. I, 8; P.L. 21, coll. 476–477; Paulinus of Nola, Epistle XXXII, 5; P.L. 61, coll. 328–329.

[4] Itinerarium Aetheriae, 48–49, éd. Sources chrétiennes (Paris, 1948), pp. 262–266.

[5] On the discovery of the Holy Cross. P.G. 87, col. 4072 A.

[6] Chronicon pascale. P.G. 92, col. 988.

[7] Nicephorus of Constantinople, Historia syntomos. P.G. 100, col. 913 A.

THE PROTECTION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The festival of the Veil (in Russian "Pokrov", which means both Veil and Protection), celebrated on October 1st, was instituted to commemorate the appearance of the Mother of God at Constantinople in the Xth century. This festival is almost unknown in the East. On the other hand the Russian Church has always celebrated the Protection of the Mother of God with particular solemnity. Several churches in Russia are dedicated to the "Pokrov".

The account of the appearance is to be found in the Life of St. Andrew "the Fool in Christ" (died 956).[1] It is at the church of Blachernes, where the robe, the veil and part of the girdle of the Holy Virgin are preserved, that the appearance occurred. During the office of the vigil, about four o'clock in the morning, St. Andrew and his disciple Epiphanius saw a majestic Woman advancing towards the ambo, supported by St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist, and accompanied by several saints. On reaching the centre of the church, the Mother of God knelt down and remained long in prayer, Her face bathed in tears. When She had prayed yet again before the altar, She took off the shining veil which enveloped Her and, holding it above Her head, extended it over all the people present in the church. Andrew and Epiphanius alone were able to see the appearance of the Mother of God and Her veil which shone like the glory of God, but all who were present felt the grace of Her protection. This invisible protection of the Mother of God, interceding with Her Son for the whole universe, protection that St. Andrew could contemplate in the form of a veil covering the faithful, constitutes the central idea of the festival of October 1st: "The Virgin is to-day present in the church: with the choirs of the saints She prays God invisibly for us. Angels and bishops prostrate themselves, apostles and prophets rejoice: for the Mother of God intercedes for us before the eternal God."

Matins, Stich. of Tone 8

Kontakion, Tone 3

In our icon, the Mother of God is seen standing on a small cloud, hovering in the air above the crowd of the faithful. Clothed in Her traditional maphorion, She has both arms outstretched in the gesture of prayer, which here expresses Her prayer of intercession. Two

Matins, Tone 6

angels hold by either end a great veil which billows in the form of a vault over the Mother of God. In some icons one sees yet another veil draped over the outstretched arms of the Virgin in prayer. Sometimes (in late iconography) there is substituted for this veil, as the result of a confusion, an episcopal omophorion. The procession of saints which surrounded the Queen of the Heavens at the time of Her appearance is represented by two groups of apostles and prophets with St. John the Forerunner (on the right). On his scroll: "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near."

In the foreground, on the semi-circular ambo in the centre of the church, a young man with a halo, clothed in a deacon's dalmatic, is holding in his left hand an open roll with the text of the Christmas Kontakion in honour of the Mother of God, whilst with a gesture of his right hand he seems to be conducting the choir. He is St. Romanos the Melodist, the famous hymnographer who lived in the VIth century. This anachronism is easily explained: the memory of St. Romanos, celebrated on October 1st, coincides with the festival of the Protection of the Mother of God. The life of St. Romanos tells us that this choir boy, despised by his fellows, received from the Mother of God, with the Christmas Kontakion, the marvellous gift of hymnography. The new hymn of Romanos, which impressed the patriarch and the emperor, must have earned him the rank of precentor in St. Sophia. We see, in fact, to the left of the ambo a deacon in dalmatic humbly surrendering his place to St. Romanos. The choir of youths and girls is placed behind the semicircle of the ambo. This scene in the life of St. Romanos, introduced into the iconographic composition of the Protection, takes us outside the framework of history, mingling persons from the "Life of St. Romanos" with those from the "Life of St. Andrew the Fool in Christ". Thus, the patriarch and the emperor, both crowned with haloes, are not contemporaries of the appearance at Blachernes. Both have their eyes turned towards the Melodist, whose singing they are admiring. In the same way, the two monks dressed in black hoods, behind the patriarch and the emperor in the left hand corner of the icon, form part of the same scene. But to the right of the ambo, two persons in the foreground are detached from the crowd of the faithful who are admiring St. Romanos. They are St. Andrew and St. Epiphanius, the witnesses of the appearance of the Mother of God. St. Andrew is turned towards his disciple showing him the appearance with a gesture of the right arm extended towards the Mother of God. The "fool in Christ" is dressed only in a cloak, leaving visible his half-naked body, his emaciated legs and arms. Epiphanius, crowned with a halo like his master, is wearing a long tunic under his cloak.

The architectural background represents the church of Blachernes but looks more like a Russian cathedral with five cupolas.

See reproduction on page 154.
The Protection of the Holy Virgin. Novgorod school, late XVth century. 41 x 32½ inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London.

[1] Bolland., AASS., Maii, VI, 4–11; P.G. 111, coll. 627–888. Account of the appearance: coll. 848–849.

THE PRESENTATION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN IN THE TEMPLE

The Presentation or Entry (εἴσοδος) of the Mother of God in the Temple (November 21st) does not belong to the most ancient festivals of the Church. None the less, it must be earlier than the end of the VIIth century, since St. Andrew of Crete had known it at Jerusalem at this epoch. It seems that it was introduced at Constantinople a century later, under the Patriarch St. Tarasius. It was to be adopted in the West only under Pope Gregory XI, who had it celebrated for the first time at Avignon in 1374.

Like the festival of the Nativity of the Mother of God (see above), that of Her Presentation in the Temple was created by the Tradition of the Church, which made use of the apocrypha in order to emphasise—this time in the person of the chosen Virgin consecrating Herself to the service of God—"the fulfilment of the economy of the Creator". The mystery of this marian festival, which can be compared with the Assumption, leads us into the very treasure-house of the Tradition; the Church breaks the silence of the Scriptures and shows us the incomprehensible ways of Providence, which prepare the receptacle of the Word, "the Mother predetermined before the ages", "preached by the prophets", now introduced into the Holy of Holies, like a "Hidden Treasure of the Glory of God".

Troparion, Tone 4

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 4
Kontakion, Tone 4

The theme of the temple is developed in the liturgy and iconography of the Presentation. It is the temple rebuilt by Zorobabel, less glorious than that of Solomon. The rabbinical tradition tells us: "Five things which were in the first temple were no longer in the second. They were: the Fire from on high, the Oil of anointment, the Ark, the Holy Spirit, the Urim and Thummim."[1] The Holy Spirit abandons the Temple, to speak by the prophets. But He will confer on the temple of the law a glory not to be compared with that of the old covenant, by introducing into the Holy of Holies the Virgin who is to give birth to "Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. vi, 20). He who welcomes the Holy Virgin, the priest Zacharias, the future father of the Forerunner, reunites in his person the two traditions—priestly and prophetic. If he allows the Virgin to go in behind the second veil, which is contrary to the Law, it is because he sees in Her the new Ark of the covenant, "the living Ark". "The angels were astonished to see the Virgin enter the Holy of Holies": the Divine plan of the Incarnation remains incomprehensible "to the principalities and powers in heavenly places", which will know only through the Church "the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God" (Eph. iii, 9–10). It is the secret preparation of the humanity of Christ: in the temple of Jerusalem the chosen Virgin will prepare herself to become later "the Temple of His Body", that which will be destroyed and in three days raised up. The theme of the temple, in the feast of the Presentation of the Holy Virgin, allows a glimpse of that of the Church—Body of Christ. The assimilation of the Mother of God to the Ark of the covenant lends a marian meaning to the verse of Ps. cxxxi sung at the Vespers of the Assumption: "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou and the ark of thy holiness."

The Epistle for the service, Heb. ix, 2–7

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 4
Ode 9 of the Canon

Many, since Origen, have used the symbolism which likens the three parts of the temple to the three stages of spiritual life—purification, illumination and union, to which correspond the three books of Solomon—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and the Song of Songs. The court of the temple corresponds to active life, where the aim is ἀπάθεια (freedom from passions). The veil of "the Holy" (the second part of the temple) opens the way of "natural contemplation" (Φυσικὴ θεωρία)—knowledge of God in the creation. "The Holy of Holies" corresponds to contemplation properly so-called, which is θεολογία, or knowledge of God in the Logos.[2] We again find the three parts of the temple in the iconography of the Presentation of the Mother of God. Thus, in our icon the scene unfolds in the inner court of the temple, near the entrance to "the Holy". The priest Zacharias, clothed in his priestly robes, stands before the doors of "the Holy" on the first step of the staircase (the fifteen degrees of the temple which correspond to the fifteen "psalms of the degrees"). Below, the Holy Virgin, outstretching her arms towards Zacharias, starts to mount the steps which lead towards "the Holy of Holies". At the top, She is seen again, already there, sitting on the highest step, near the door of the "Holy of Holies", where an angel comes to assist Her. It is the degree of contemplation, the "pre-engagement with God", the start of the way of union during which

See reproduction on page 155.
The Presentation of the Virgin Russian, XVIIth century. Photo: Castle De Wijenburgh. Echteld, Netherlands

Matins, Stich. of Tone 1





Vespers, Stich. of Tone I

the Holy Virgin will be "nourished on heavenly bread". The Holy Virgin, represented twice on our icon, has nothing of the child about Her despite Her small size, which must indicate Her young age (three years old). She is already a perfected person: the Mother of God clothed in the maphorion, such as will be seen, for example, in icons of the Annunciation. In fact, St. Gregory of Nyssa says that the Song of Songs corresponds to spiritual maturity—the age of contemplative life "which introduces the soul into the divine sanctuaries".[3]

Behind the Holy Virgin, in the centre of the court, St. Joachim and St. Anna advance towards the priest Zacharias, presenting their Daughter to him. They are followed by young girls, who "with tapers in their hands" accompany the Virgin consecrated to God. Unlike St. Anna and the Mother of God, the virgins of the temple have their heads uncovered.[1] The background is occupied with temple buildings.

This is a Russian icon of the XVIIth century.

[1] Song of Songs, Rabba 8: in H. L. Strack und P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, vol. II, p. 133.

[2] Origen: On Psalm cxvii; P.G. 12, col. 1581.

[3] Commentary on the Song of Songs. P.G. 44, coll. 768 A and 772 A.

[4] According to a manual of iconography published at Novgorod in the XVIth century, seven virgins should go before Joachim and Anna, whilst the remainder should go behind them.

The classical iconography of the Nativity of Christ, which we see in the icon reproduced here, has its prototype on the Vth and VIth century ampullae, in which pilgrims used to bring home from the Holy Land oil from the lamps burning in sacred places.[1]

The descriptive part of the icon corresponds to the Kontakion of the festival: "The Virgin to-day bringeth forth the Transubstantial, and the earth offereth a cave to the Unapproachable. Angels give glory with shepherds, and the wise men journey with the Star; because for our sake is born, as a little Child, God the Eternal." Two other scenes, based on Tradition, appear in the lower corners.

In its content the icon of Christ's Nativity has two fundamental aspects: first of all, it discloses the very essence of the event, the immutable fact of the Incarnation of God; it places us before a visible testimony of the fundamental dogma of Christian faith, underlining by its details both the Divinity and the human nature of the Word made flesh. Secondly, the icon of the Nativity shows us the effect of this event on the natural life of the world, gives as it were a perspective of all its consequences. For, according to the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, the Nativity of Christ "is not a festival of creation but a festival of re-creation"[2], of a renewal, which sanctifies the whole world. (*Veniens mundum consecrare*, says the "Martyrologium Romanum"—"He came to consecrate the Universe".) Through the Incarnation of God, the whole of creation acquires a new meaning, lying in the final purpose of its being—its ultimate transfiguration. So all creation takes part in the event and round the Divine Child, newly born, we see representatives of the whole created world, each rendering his fitting service, or as the Church says—each giving thanks in his own way. "What shall we bring Thee, O Christ, when Thou art born on earth as Man for our sake; for each of the creatures, who have their being from Thee, brings thanks to Thee: angels their songs, the heavens a star, the wise men gifts, the shepherds wonder, the earth a cave, the wilderness a manger, but we—the Virgin Mother." To this the icon adds gifts from the animal and vegetable worlds.

Stichiron in Christmas Vespers

From the point of view of both meaning and composition, the centre of the icon, to which all the details relate in one way or another, is the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger, with the dark cave where he was born as background.[3] In a homily attributed to St. Gregory of Nyssa we find a comparison drawn between the birth of Christ in a cave and the spiritual light shining forth in the shadow of death that encompasses mankind. The black mouth of the cave in the icon is, in its symbolic meaning, precisely this world, stricken with sin through man's fault, in which "the Sun of truth" shone forth.

The Gospel of Luke (ii, 7) speaks of the manger and the swaddling clothes, "and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger", and further mentions them as the distinctive sign given by the angel, by which the shepherds were to recognise in the Babe their Saviour: "And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger" (Luke ii, 12). The stichiron tells us that the manger was the offering of the wilderness to the Divine Child. The significance of this offering is revealed in the words of St. Gregory the Theologian, who writes, "Bow down before mangers through which thou, who wast dumb, art brought up by the Word" (i.e. you grow up, nourished by the bread of the Eucharist).[4] The wilderness (in this case an empty uninhabited place), which offered refuge to the Saviour, Whom from His birth the world did not accept, was the fulfilment of the Old Testament prefiguration—the wilderness where the symbol of the Eucharist was given—manna. He who had rained manna—bread from heaven—on the Jewish people, Himself became the bread of the Eucharist—the Lamb, placed upon the altar, the symbol of which is the manger brought by the wilderness of the New Testament as an offering to the Babe.

Cave, manger, swaddling clothes—are indications of the kenosis of the Godhead, His abasement, the utter humility of Him who, invisible in His nature, becomes visible in the flesh for man's sake, is born in a cave, is wrapped in swaddling clothes, thus foreshadowing His death and burial, the sepulchre and the burial clothes.



In the cave, close by the manger, stand an ox and an ass. The Gospels do not speak of them. Yet in all the pictures of the Nativity of Christ, they are immediately beside the Divine Child. Their place in the very centre of the icon points to the importance given by the Church to this detail. It is nothing less than the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah (i, 3) which has the deepest instructive significance: "The ox knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel does not know Me, and the people has not regarded Me." By the presence of the animals, the icon reminds us of Isaiah's prophecy and calls us to the knowledge and understanding of the mystery of the Divine Dispensation.

Opposite page: The Nativity of Christ. Novgorod school, attributed to the XVth century. 17 1/4 x 21 1/3 inches. Photo: Christies, New York

Looking at the icon of the Nativity of Christ, the first thing that draws our attention is the position of the Mother of God and the place She occupies. In this "festival of re-creation" She is "the renewal of all born on earth", the new Eve. As the first Eve became the mother of all living people, so the new Eve became the Mother of all renewed mankind, deified through the Incarnation of the Son of God. She is the highest thanksgiving to God, which man, from among all created beings, brings to the Creator. By this offering in the person of the Mother of God, fallen mankind gives assent to its salvation through the Incarnation of God. The icon of the Nativity graphically underlines this role of the Mother of God, singling Her out from among the other figures by Her central position and at times by Her size. She is lying immediately beside the Babe, but usually already outside the cave, on a bed, of a kind such as the Jews carried with them on their travels.

The posture of the Mother of God is always full of deep meaning and is immediately connected with dogmatic problems, which have arisen at different times or places. Alterations of this posture emphasise, according to need, either the Divine or the human nature of the Saviour. Thus in some images She is half-sitting, which points to the absence in Her case of the usual sufferings and therefore to the virgin nature of the Nativity and the Divine origin of the Babe (against the Nestorian error). But in the great majority of images of Christ's Nativity the Mother of God is lying down, showing in her posture a great lassitude, which should remind those who pray of the undoubtedly human nature of the Babe, "in order that the incarnation should not be suspected of being an illusion", as Nicholas Mezarites says.[5]

Round the central group—the Divine Child and His Mother—are grouped all the details which, as we have said, testify to the Incarnation itself and to its effect upon the whole created world.

Angels perform a twofold service: they glorify and they bring good tidings. In an icon this is usually expressed by the fact that some of them turn upwards and sing glory to God, others lean downwards, towards men, to whom they bring good tidings.

These men are the shepherds. They are shown listening to the angels' message; and often one of them is playing the reed-pipe, thus adding human art—music—to the angels' choir.

On the other side of the cave are the wise men, led by the star. They are represented as riding or, as in our icon, walking with gifts. A long ray from the star points directly to the cave. This ray connects the star with a part of the sphere which goes beyond the limits of the icon—a symbolic representation of the heavenly world. In this way the icon shows that the star is not only a cosmic phenomenon, but also a messenger from the world on high, bringing tidings of the birth of "the heavenly One upon earth". It is that light which, according to the words of St. Leo the Great, was hidden from the Jews, but shone forth to the heathen. In the shepherds, the first sons of Israel to worship the Babe, the Church sees the beginning of the Jewish Church, and in the wise men—"the beginning of nations"—the Church of the heathen. On one side are the shepherds—simple unsophisticated men, with whom the world on high enters into communication directly, amid their everyday working life, on the other side are the wise men—men of learning, who have to accomplish a long journey from the knowledge of what is relative to the knowledge of what is absolute, through the object that they study. In the adoration of the wise men the Church testifies that it accepts and sanctifies all human science leading towards it, provided that the relative light of the extra-Christian revelation brings those who serve it to the worship of the absolute light. It

should be noted that the wise men are represented as being of different ages, which emphasises the fact that revelation is given to men independently of their years and worldly experience.

In a bottom corner of the icon two women are washing the Child. This scene is based on a tradition, which also is transmitted to us by the apocryphal Gospels of pseudo-Matthew and pseudo-James. The two women are the two midwives whom Joseph brought to the Mother of God. This scene from everyday life shows clearly that the Child is like any other new-born babe and is subject to the natural requirements of human nature.

Another detail emphasises that in the Nativity of Christ "the order of nature is vanquished"—this is Joseph. He is not part of the central group of the Child and His Mother; he is not the father and is emphatically separated from this group. Before him, under the guise of an old and bent shepherd, stands the devil tempting him. On some icons he is represented with small horns or a short tail. The presence of the devil and his role of tempter acquires a particularly deep meaning in connection with this "feast of re-creation". Here, on the basis of tradition, the icon transmits the meaning of certain liturgic texts, which speak of the doubts of Joseph and the troubled state of his soul. This state is expressed in the icon by his dejected attitude and is emphasised by the black mouth of the cave, which sometimes serves as a background to his figure. Tradition, transmitted also by the apocrypha, relates how the devil tempted Joseph telling him that a virgin birth is not possible, being opposed to the laws of nature. This argument, assuming different forms, keeps on reappearing through the whole history of the Church. It is the basis of many heresies. In the person of Joseph the icon discloses not only his personal drama, but the drama of all mankind—the difficulty of accepting that which is "beyond words or reason"—the Incarnation of God.

While in some icons the Mother of God is represented looking at the Babe, "keeping in Her heart" sayings about Him, or else looking straight before Her at the external world, in our icon, as in many others, She looks at Joseph as it were expressing by this look compassion for his state. In this the icon teaches a tolerant and compassionate attitude towards human unbelief and doubt.

[1] These vessels bear images of the Gospel events, which took place in the particular locality where the vessels were made. Eusebius of Caesarea relates, in his *History of the Church*, that in the place of the Nativity of Christ St. Constantine built a church, the crypt of which was the very cave of Bethlehem. It is there, according to the opinion of archaeologists, that the scene of the Nativity of Christ reproduced upon the ampullae was represented with all possible historical exactness. This scene formed the basis of our iconography of this Festival.

[2] St. Gregory the Theologian, Discourse 38; P. G. 36, col. 316B.

[3] The Gospels say nothing of the cave: we know of it from Tradition. The oldest written evidences of it date from the IInd century: St. Justin the Philosopher in his dialogue with Trypho (about 155–160), quoting from the Gospel of St. Matthew adds, "since Joseph could find no room in which to stay in that village, he established himself in a cave not far from Bethlehem".

[4] St. Gregory the Theologian, Discourse 38; P. G. 36, col. 332A.

[5] A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, Leipzig, 1908. Part II, p. 47.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST

Opposite page: XVIIth century icon. 10½ x 12 inches. Private coll., Paris

The icon reproduced here is a characteristic example of XVIIth century multiple icons with many figures. It consists of 16 scenes, differing as to time and place of action, combined into one general composition. Since all these scenes are connected with the Nativity of Christ, either directly or indirectly, they are grouped in such a manner that one scene overlaps another; this gives the image the character of a consecutive story and, as a whole, constitutes a multiple icon of the Nativity.

In the upper part of the icon, in the centre, we see the usual representation of the Nativity of Christ with worshipping angels, the shepherds (immediately below the manger) and Joseph



tempted by the devil (below the scene of the washing of the Child). In the left hand corner are the wise men riding to worship the Saviour, led by an angel with the star in his hands.[1] Below them, in a kind of pavilion, the Mother of God sits on a golden throne, on Her lap the Divine Child, to Whom the wise men are offering gifts. On the other side of the icon, to the right of the Saviour's manger, the angel appears to the wise men in a dream, warning them not to return to Herod (Matt. ii, 12). Above this scene are the wise men departing by another way. Below the adoration of the wise men, we see the angel appearing to Joseph, ordering him to flee into Egypt (Matt. ii, 13). On the opposite side is the flight into Egypt of the Mother of God with the Child and with Joseph accompanied by his son, the future Apostle and first bishop of Jerusalem, James. This scene has as its background an Egyptian temple, with an idol falling down from its wall, thus representing the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, "Behold, the Lord... shall come to Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall be moved at his presence" (Is. xix, 1).[2] In the lower left hand corner of the icon, King Herod questions the chief priests and scribes, who hold in their hands books with prophecies of the birth of Christ (Matt. ii, 4). Next to it is the massacre of the innocents. In the centre of this scene we see mothers seeking their babies among the heap of slain children, whose heads are arranged in several rows in the foreground. Above this scene, to the left, with a city wall as a background, is a group of weeping mothers ("In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not", Matt. ii, 18). Beside it is the blessed Elizabeth with the infant John in her arms, hiding in a cleft in the rock from a soldier who pursues her. "Elizabeth took John and implored the stone, saying: take in a mother with child. And the mountain took in the Forerunner."[3] Nearby is a mother hiding under a tree a baby, with a halo, wrapped in swaddling clothes. Above this scene there is a microscopic inscription: "Nathanael lying under the fig tree". Neither the service of the day, nor the Apocryphal Gospels say anything about Nathanael escaping death during the massacre of the innocents, as did John the Baptist. Nevertheless, beginning with the XVIIth century, this scene frequently appears in multiple icons. Moreover the XIth century Greek Gospels now in the National Library in Paris have an illustration to the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John[4], depicting the meeting of Christ with Nathanael. The illustration shows the moment when Christ talks with Nathanael who is accompanied by Philip who had called him (John i, 45–50); while at a certain distance, in the background, standing under a tree, is Nathanael represented as a child with a halo. Perhaps both the Greek manuscript and the Russian icons are based on the mysterious phrase of St. John Chrysostom in his interpretation of this text of the Gospel of St. John, "He already knew the good disposition of Nathanael, not as a man who had watched him, but as God", and further: "What? Do you think Christ saw Nathanael only just before Philip called him, and had not seen him before that with an eye that never sleeps? He did see him, and no one will deny it."[5] On the basis of these words of St. John Chrysostom, and also on the basis of the fact that Nathanael is sometimes represented as an infant and sometimes as a boy, one may surmise that the Gospel expression "under a fig tree" should be understood as Nathanael's whole life. In that case, his image in the icon of the Nativity of Christ emphasises the Divinity of the Saviour. But of course it is possible that these images of Nathanael are based on some text unknown to us, which was used by ancient iconographers.

In the lower right hand corner of the icon is the slaying of St. Zacharias "between the temple and the altar" (Matt. xxiii, 35). This scene, based on the words of the Saviour, is explained in the menology for December 29th, which also gives the meaning of its presence in the icon of the Nativity of Christ. "And they also put to death the holy Prophet Zacharias, because when the Immaculate Virgin came to the temple with the Child for purification, he placed Her among the virgins, where women who have husbands have no right to stand..." In other words St. Zacharias was slain by the scribes and pharisees, and the cause of his slaying was the virgin birth and the prophetic power of Zacharias to see the Divinity of Christ. But there exists also another version of this event in the apocryphal Protevangelium Jacobi

(ch. xvi), according to which St. Zacharias was slain by the orders of Herod for refusing to reveal to his servants the place of concealment of the infant John the Forerunner, whom Herod took for the newly born King of Israel. In this case, Zacharias was slain during the massacre of the innocents and suffered with them for the newly born Saviour of the world.

From the artistic point of view our icon is a very good example of multiple icons of the XVIIth century.[6] However, the iconographer is so carried away by the story he relates that the central subject, surrounded by secondary events to which he gives an equal prominence, is totally lost among them and recedes to a secondary position (compare with the preceding icon). The artist is obviously seeking to leave no space empty and the whole profusion of details lacks unity of composition. And yet this icon possesses great spiritual warmth. Despite the smallness of the images there are no finicky lines. Neither has it the dryness characteristic of multiple icons of that and later periods. The manner is free, the colours are well harmonised and distributed with great artistic taste. The prevailing tones are vermilion and dark greenish blue. There is much gold which, with the vermilion and reddish earth, gives the icon a warm general tone.

[1] An analogous theme, i.e. an angel with the star in his hands, leading the wise men, can be seen also in the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris.

[2] Menology, Dec. 26th, and also Apocryphal Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew, c. xxiii.

[3] The service of the day. Glory of the Innocents, Tone 8, by St. Andrew of Crete.

[4] See also the Protevangelium Jacobi, c. xxii.

[5] St. John Chrysostom, Discourse 20, 2: P.G. 59, col. 126.

[6] A similar icon of the Nativity of Christ, of about the same period, can be found in the Old-Believers' church in Rogozhski Cemetery in Moscow. It is attributed to the Stroganov School. (The icon is reproduced in the book *Photographs of ancient icons of the Old-Believers' churches of Rogozhski Cemetery in Moscow*, 1913.) It has the same 16 scenes and they are placed in the same order. The only difference is that the composition of our icon is more rich in details. For example, the Moscow icon has no angel in the upper part of the icon, where his place is occupied by a large intricate star; there is no heap of the heads of the slain innocents; there are fewer soldiers and their postures, like the posture of the Mother of God, are more mannered. There is also a certain difference in the architecture. In all else there is a complete analogy between the two icons, and even the colours appear to be alike.

THE BAPTISM OF THE LORD, OR EPIPHANY

"And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mark i, 10, 11). (From the Gospel read at the Matins of the day.)

See reproduction on page 166. *The Baptism of Our Lord. Russian, XVIth century. 59 x 36 cm. Photo: Temple Gallery, London*

Icons of the Baptism of the Lord are an exact reproduction of this Gospel testimony, with the addition of details corresponding to the divine service of the day, as for instance, angels and allegorical figures at the feet of the Saviour. The festival of the Baptism is also called Epiphany, since Baptism is the manifestation of the Divinity of Christ, when He openly begins His service to redeem the world. "It is not the day when Christ was born that should be called Epiphany", says St.John Chrysostom, "but the day when He was baptised. Not through His birth did He become known to all, but through His Baptism. Before the day of Baptism he was not known to the people."[2]

The Baptism of Christ has two fundamental aspects: on this day, the full dogmatic truth of God in three Persons was revealed to men. "Our God, the Trinity, has this day revealed Himself to us indivisibly; for the Father bore witness to His Parenthood with manifest testimony, the Spirit descended from the heavens like a dove, and the Son bowed His most pure head to the Forerunner and was baptised..." (Troparion, Royal Hours) This mystery of the three Persons in one Godhead, which is beyond all understanding, was here made manifest not spiritually but plainly, in sensory forms. John the Forerunner heard the voice of the Father and saw the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, confirming this voice—both of them testifying to the appearance among men of the Son of God in the Person of the Baptised. On the other hand, just as later Christ established the sacrament of the Eucharist while celebrating the Old Testament Passover, so on that day, while performing the act of ablutions established by the prophets, He establishes the New Testament sacrament of Baptism.

See reproduction on page 167.

In accordance with the Gospel text cited above, in the upper part of the icon there is a segment of a circle symbolising the opening heavens "which Adam had closed for himself and his descendants, just as he had closed the Garden of Eden by the flaming sword".[3] This segment of a circle signifies the presence of God, which sometimes is emphasised still more by a hand, blessing. Thence are shed upon the Saviour rays of light, with the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. Unfortunately this most important detail has been obliterated by time in our icon. In general it is depicted in the same manner as in the Nativity of Christ, except that a white dove takes the place of the star.[4]

The holy Fathers of the Church explain the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the Lord's Baptism by analogy with the Flood: just as then the world was purified of its iniquities by the waters of the Flood and the dove brought an olive branch into Noah's Ark, announcing the end of the Flood and peace returned upon earth, so too now the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove to announce the remission of sins and God's mercy to the world. "There an olive branch, here the mercy of our God", says St.John of Damascus.[5]

To sanctify the waters for our purification and renewal, He Who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world "is covered by the waters of Jordan", according to the hymns of the festival. In the symbolical language of the icon this is expressed by the fact that the Saviour is represented standing, as it were, against a background of water, as though in a cave. This gives us to understand that not a part of His body, but His whole body is immersed in token of His burial, for Baptism signifies the death of the Lord (Col. ii, 12). As a sign of the fact that here the initiative belongs to Him, that He, the Master, came to the servant and asked to be baptised, the Saviour is almost always represented as walking or making a movement towards John the Forerunner, at the same time bending His head beneath John's arm. With His right hand He blesses the waters of Jordan, which cover Him, sanctifying them by His immersion. From then onwards water becomes an image not of death but of birth into a new life. This is why in the great majority of images of baptism in the catacombs the person baptised, not excluding the Saviour Himself, is depicted as a child.[6] Although some images

show the Saviour with a cloth binding His loins, the majority of icons show Him quite naked, in accordance with the texts of the Divine services. This also emphasises the kenosis of His Divinity. "He strips Himself, Who clothes the heavens with clouds." It also shows the purpose of this kenosis for, by stripping His body, He thereby clothes the nakedness of Adam, and with him that of the whole of mankind, in the garment of glory and incorruptibility.

Canon of the festival. Ode 8. Matins of the eve of the feast.
Ibid., Ode 9

The icon of the Baptism is one of those which have the greatest number of analogies with Old Testament prefigurations. Thus, in addition to those already mentioned, two small figures are usually represented at the feet of the Saviour, among the fish swimming in the waters of Jordan. One of them is that of a man, naked, turning his back to Him; the other that of a woman, half-naked, usually running away, at times riding a fish. These details illustrate the Old Testament texts, which enter into the divine service of the festival and are a prophetic prefiguration of Baptism. "The sea saw and fled: Jordan was turned back" (Ps. cxiii, 3). The male figure—an allegory of Jordan—is explained by the following text: "Elisha turned back the river Jordan with the mantle, when Elijah had been taken up, and the waters were divided hither and thither; and the bed of the river was to Elisha a dry pathway, as a true type of Baptism, by which we pass through the changing course of life." The female figure is an allegory of the sea and refers to the other prefiguration of Baptism—the crossing of the Red Sea by the Jews.

Sunday before Epiphany, Troparion

St. John the Forerunner officiates, his right hand placed on the head of the Saviour. This sacramental gesture has always been part of the ritual of baptism.[7] In his left hand he sometimes holds a scroll, the symbol of his preaching, or, as in our icon, makes a gesture of prayer to express the trembling which seized him. "... I do not dare to hold Thy most pure head; sanctify Thou me, O Lord, by Thy divine manifestation."

Stich. Litiya, Tone 4

Angels take part in the holy ritual. Texts of the Divine services, mentioning their presence, speak of their state: "The choirs of angels were full of wonder, fear and joy." But they do not speak of the role they played. So their role is often understood and represented differently. Sometimes, especially in later icons, they hold cloaks in their hands, evidently playing the role of attendants during Baptism and ready to cover the body of the Lord as He comes out of the water. But as a rule here, as in the icons of other feasts, their role of service is merely indicated. They are represented with their hands covered by their own cloaks as a sign of reverence before Him Whom they serve. Their number varies: two, three or more.[8]

Troparion, Tone 7. Epiphany, 9th Hour

The icon represented here is distinguished by the very rhythmic, light and elegant character of the drawing. The inclinations of the figures of the angels placed one above the other, and the inclination of John the Baptist repeat the lines of the river and of the figure of the Saviour, concentrating on Him all the attention of the onlooker.

See reproduction on page 167.
The Baptism of Our Lord. 10½ x 12¼ inches. Attributed to Moscow school, beginning of XVIth century.[1]
Photo: A La Vieille Russie, New York

[1] Muratov, *Trente-cinq Primitifs Russes*, Paris, 1931.

[2] Discourse 37—On the Baptism of our Lord and Epiphany.

[3] St. Gregory the Theologian. P.G. 36, col. 353.

[4] As regards the representation of the Holy Spirit as a dove in other icons, for instance, in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles and particularly in the Annunciation, which acquired popularity in the XVIIth century, the Great Moscow Council (1667) gives the following explanation: "The Holy Spirit is not in His essence a dove, but God... At the holy Baptism of Christ in Jordan the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove, and therefore in this context alone should the Holy Spirit be depicted as a dove. But in other contexts those who have understanding should not represent the Holy Spirit as a dove. For on Mount Tabor He appeared as a cloud, and at other times otherwise." (Acts of Moscow Councils, 1666-1667, Moscow, 1893.)

[5] Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, Book III, c. 16.

[6] In the first centuries of Christianity a man's age was often counted not from his natural birth but from his birth in grace, his baptism. This is why in many epitaphs of Christians buried in the catacombs the age given is that of an infant, whereas the size of the coffin shows that the man buried was an adult.

[7] St. Dionysius the Areopagite. *The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, c. II, sec. 5-7.

[8] Reverence before something holy is usually expressed in iconography by covering the hands of persons holding sacred objects. Thus bishops, for instance, often hold the Gospels in their covered hand, angels—the instruments of the Lord's Passion, and so forth. This method was taken from an Eastern custom, which was also adopted by the court etiquette in Byzantium, where objects handed to the emperor or accepted from him were held by covered hands as a sign of special respect.





THE PRESENTATION OF CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE

The Presentation or "Meeting" (ἡ Ὑπαπαντὴ) of our Lord Jesus Christ (February 2nd) is better known in the West under the name of Purification of the Holy Virgin. Like the majority of feasts of Palestinian origin, that of the Presentation of Christ in the temple belongs to Christian antiquity. Aetheria (end of the IVth century) saw it celebrated in Jerusalem with a procession and with great solemnity.[1] This feast was to be introduced in Constantinople in the VIth century under Justin and Justinian[2], and thence to pass to Rome in the course of the VIIth century. The practice of holding lighted candles during the office of the Hypapante, introduced in Jerusalem about 450, has been preserved in the West: hence the name of Candlemas ("Chandeleur"—in France, and "Lichtmesse"—in German countries).

Like the feast of the Circumcision (January 1st) the Presentation of the Christ-Child in the temple shows us the "Author of the Law accomplishing what was laid down by the Law" (Vespers, Tone 1): it is the consecration of the first born son to God (Ex. xiii, 2) and the sacrifice of the Purification of the Mother, forty days after the birth of the male child (Lev. xii, 6–8). The Gospel account (Luke ii, 22–39) has served as basis both to the liturgical text and to the iconography of the feast.

The first known representations of the Presentation of Christ in the temple are found on a mosaic in Santa Maria Maggiore (Vth century) and on an enamelled cruciform reliquary in the Lateran Museum (end of Vth or beginning of VIth century). The iconography of the feast of the Hypapante was definitely established in the IXth and Xth centuries, and remains almost unchanged.[3] Sometimes, one sees the Christ-Child carried by His Mother, or rather, She is handing Him to St. Simeon, but more often it is the latter who is holding Him in his arms. Christ is never represented in swaddling clothes: He is habitually clothed in a short vest which often leaves his legs bare. Seated on the outstretched arms of the elder Simeon, He is sometimes seen giving a benediction. It is the Christ-Child of the Emmanual type: "the Word of the Father without a beginning (ἄναρχος) has received a beginning in time, without separating Himself from His Divinity" (Vespers, Tone 1). "The Ancient of Days makes Himself a Child according to the flesh" (Vespers, Tone 5). "He who gave the Law to Moses on Sinai... to observe His Law has Himself brought to the temple" (Vespers, Tone 1). As in the account of St. Luke, the theme of the Purification of the Mother is almost forgotten: the central moment of the feast is the "Meeting" of the Messiah: the meeting of the Old and the New Testament.

The scene of the "Meeting" takes place in the temple, in front of the altar, which is represented in our icon covered with a canopy. On the altar is sometimes seen a cross, a book or a scroll. On the two sides of the altar are the Mother of God (to the left of the spectator) and St. Simeon (to the right). The Mother of God is holding out Her two hands covered with the maphorion in a gesture of offering. She has just handed Her Son to Simeon. The ancient holy man, leaning forwards, holds the Child in his two hands, also covered with his garment (as a sign of veneration). St. Joseph follows the Mother of God carrying in the fold of his garment the offering of poor parents (Lev. xii, 8), two turtle doves or two young pigeons. These birds were to symbolise the Church of Israel and that of the Gentiles, as well as the two Testaments, of which Christ is the unique Head (Vespers, Tone 8). St. Anne the daughter of Phanuel "a widow of about four score and four years", stands behind St. Simeon, in the background. Her veiled head is seen in profile; her eyes are uplifted to express prophetic inspiration.

See reproduction on page 170.
The Presentation of Christ. Russian. ca. 1500 Moscow school. 72 x 61 cm. Photo: Castle De Wijenburgh, Echteld, Netherlands

The figure of St. Simeon, "the Host of God" (θεοδόχος), is given great importance: his prophetic saying, one of the three "Canticles of the New Testament", is sung at every Vespers throughout the liturgical year. Attempts have been made to see in the old saint who received Christ in his arms, a Priest of the Temple. Some authors say that he was one of the Doctors of the Law—son of Hillel and father of Gamaliel, master of St. Paul.[4] Others have supposed Simeon to be a translator of the Bible; one of the Seventy, and that God had preserved him in life during 350 years, till the coming of the Messiah.[5] The liturgical texts exalt him as the greatest of the prophets: more even than Moses, Simeon deserves the title of "He who has seen God" (θεόπτης), for to Moses God appeared enveloped in darkness, whilst Simeon

carried in his arms the eternal incarnate Word. Also, "He revealed to the nations the Light, the Cross and the Resurrection" (an allusion to the "sword which will pierce the soul" of Mary, in the same verse). The "Nunc Dimittis" receives a new meaning: the prophet asks the Lord to allow him to announce the Incarnation in the lower regions. On our icon there is nothing to denote the priestly dignity of Simeon. His head is not covered, he has the long hair of a Nazarene: his long garment stretches to his bare feet. The Christ-Child is "seated on the arms of the old man as on a throne". Ode 9 of the Matins makes Him say: "I am not held by the old man: it is I Who hold him, for he asks Me forgiveness."

Vespers, Stich. of Anatolius

Office of St. Simeon, February 3rd, Ode 6 of the Canon

Vespers, Tone 8

[1] Itinerarium Aetheriae, c. 26 in *Sources Chrétiennes*, vol. 21, p. 206.

[2] Theophanes, Chronography, a. 534, Bonn edition, III, p. 345.

[3] Pokrovsky, *The Gospel in iconographic monuments, especially Byzantine and Russian*, St. Petersburg, 1892, p. 108 (in Russian).

[4] See Schöttgen, *Horae hebr. und Talmud*, Dresden and Leipzig, 1733.

[5] Eutychius of Alexandria (Xth century), Annals (in Arabic), Latin translation in Migne. P.G. 111, col. 974.





THE ANNUNCIATION[1]

Like the Gospel story (Luke i, 26–38) and the religious service of the feast, the icon of the Annunciation is permeated with deep inner joy. It is the joy of the Old Testament promise being fulfilled through the Incarnation of the Redeemer of the world. "To-day is the beginning of our salvation and the manifestation of the Eternal Mystery. The Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel announceth the good tidings of grace. Wherefore let us also with him cry to the Mother of God: Hail! Thou that art full of grace; the Lord is with Thee." This joy is in the colours, in the festive rendering of details, and in the posture of the Archangel. The majority of icons depict him in swift motion: he has just descended from heaven and "his look is the look of a diligent servant intent on carrying out the task given by his Master".[2] His legs are wide apart as though he were running. In his left hand he holds a staff, the symbol of a messenger, his right hand, with a strong movement, is stretched towards the Virgin Mary; he communicates to Her the glad tidings from his Master, the Mystery of the Divine Providence.[3]

Troparion of the feast

The Mother of God is depicted either sitting, to emphasise her superiority over the Angel, or as standing erect "as though listening to the King's command".[4] As a rule She holds yarn in Her hands, more rarely a scroll. These details are borrowed from tradition; they are mentioned, for example, in the apocryphal Protevangelium Jacobi, chapter 11.

In contrast to the outer aspect, bright and festive, the inner significance of the event, the decisive moment in the history of the world, determining its subsequent fate, is rendered with great restraint and reserve by the posture and the barely noticeable gestures of the Mother of God. The icon usually emphasises one of the three moments of the event.

The first: the apparition of the Archangel, his greeting, the perturbation and fear of the Holy Virgin. In this case She turns round and, in Her surprise, drops the purple yarn She was spinning.

The second moment—the perplexity and prudence of the Mother of God, which are especially emphasised in the service of the festival, juxtaposing, as it does, the Annunciation, the beginning of our salvation, with the beginning of the fall of man. Owing to the fall of our ancestress Eve, the Virgin Mary is prudent and does not accept at once the extraordinary tidings from the world beyond, but recalls the law of nature: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" The icon renders it by the gesture of Her hand which She holds before Her breast, palm outwards—a sign of perplexity, of non-acceptance.

Finally, other icons depict the culminating moment of the event—the consent of the Mother of God. Here, bowing Her head, She presses Her right palm to Her breast—the gesture of acceptance, of submission which has decided the fate of the world: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto Me according to Thy word." Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow says of the significance of these words: "In the days of the creation of the world, when God was uttering His living and mighty 'Let there be', the word of the Creator brought creatures into the world. But on that day, unexampled in the life of the world, when Divine Miriam uttered Her brief and obedient 'So be it', I hardly dare to say what happened then—the word of the creature brought the Creator down into the world."[5]

But this emphasising of one of the moments mentioned is not the general rule and many icons combine them together, showing as it were a synthesis of the psychological state of the Mother of God. She turns Her hand in the direction of the Angel, asking for an answer to the doubts assailing Her and at the same time, by bowing Her head, expresses Her submission.

See reproduction on page 171.
The Annunciation. Russian. XVIth century, Moscow school. 17 x 21 inches. Icon Museum, Recklinghausen

In our icon the eyes of the Mother of God and the Archangel are turned not towards one another but upwards, where we see the traditional portion of a sphere, the symbol of the high heavens, and rays issuing from it—the action of the Holy Spirit. The directions in which the Mother of God and the Archangel are looking meet in these descending rays. In this detail the fundamental meaning of the event is deeply felt and transmitted, namely, the unity of action and will of God and His creature, of which the service of the festival speaks: "The Angel serves the miracle, the virgin womb receives the Son, the Holy Spirit is sent down (the rays), the Father sends His favour from on high (the sphere), and the transformation is

made by mutual consent..." Mutual consent means agreement between God and the creature. For the Incarnation is not only an act of God's will, but also of the free will and faith of the Holy Virgin Mary, says Nicholas Kabasilas in his discourse on the Annunciation. The angle of the Angel's head shows that he does not speak from himself. Speaking with the Mother of God, revealing to Her the mystery of Divine Providence, he emphasises with his glance his dependence on Him who sent him, he stands before the face of God. For the Mother of God this is a moment of sanctification, the beginning of Her Divine Motherhood. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee." Accepting the tidings of the Archangel, She answers with Her gesture not the messenger but the Sender. Although the Angel looks upwards, his whole movement is towards the Mother of God; but Her movement and the whole of Her is directed upwards. This movement serves to emphasise, as it were, that the Mother of God's consent is not a passive acceptance of the Annunciation, but an active surrender of Herself to God's will, a voluntary and independent participation of the Mother of God, and, in Her Person, of all creatures, in the work of Salvation.

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 4

The iconography of the Annunciation is one of the most ancient known iconographies of festivals. An image of the Annunciation exists already in the Roman catacomb of Priscilla, which archeologists attribute to the IInd century. Its iconography has remained fundamentally the same—differences are merely in details. Thus, according to the custom prevailing at that time, the Angel is represented there without wings.

Although our icon lacks the vividness and purity of colours characteristic of icons of the XVth century, it nevertheless possesses the qualities of the best tradition and is an example of a deep theological penetration into the dogmatic essence of the image, so characteristic of Russian icon-painting.

[1] Side by side with the icon of the Annunciation there exists an image called the "Pre-Annunciation". According to tradition related also in apocryphas and commented upon by the fathers, the angel first addressed the Virgin Mary invisibly by a spring or a well. When, frightened, she returned to the house he appeared to her again in human form. The Pre-Annunciation is rarely met with and can be found mostly on icons depicting in detail the life of the Mother of God.

[2] Description of Nicholas Mesarites. A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche*, Leipzig, 1908, vol. II, p. 45.

[3] In many icons of the Annunciation the angel is depicted as if his flight was still not quite completed; although he stands on the ground, one wing is raised, which too is a symbol of his being a messenger. This symbol is also transmitted in the service, when the deacon who, according to the interpretation of St. John Chrysostom, represents an angel, symbolically repeats this gesture by lifting his stole with his right hand every time he calls the faithful to prayer. But while at the Annunciation the flight of the angel is from heaven down to earth, in the Divine service the deacon invites the faithful to lift themselves up with him in prayer.

[4] Description of Nicholas Mesarites. See the Annunciation on the Iconostasis, Pl. I above.

[5] Sermon 23 on the day of the Annunciation. Moscow, 1874.



THE RAISING OF LAZARUS

Russian, XVIth century. Private Collection

The Raising of Lazarus belongs to the number of images, whose iconography has greatly developed since the time of its inception. The most ancient images known of this event belong to the first centuries of Christianity, beginning with the IInd century (about forty have so far been discovered in the Roman catacombs). The great majority of them, both in the catacombs and on ancient sarcophagi, contain only two figures: that of Christ raising him, and that of Lazarus coming forth from the tomb, bound with grave-clothes. However, beginning with the IVth century, the composition becomes more complex with the addition of those details which can be seen also in the icons of to-day. As distinct from images of other feasts, the inner meaning of which is revealed by representations of aspects inaccessible to sensory perception (as for instance that of the Assumption, the Descent into Hell and others), where many concrete details bear therefore a symbolic character, the icon of the Raising of Lazarus, as well as that of the Convincing of Thomas, are images not of the hidden meaning not of what is understood, but of what is concretely transmitted and visibly demonstrated. The icon transmits the external, physical side of the miracle, making it as accessible to human perception and inquiry as it was when the miracle was performed and just as it is related in the Gospels. In accordance with the Gospel of St. John (John xi, 1–46), the icon shows every detail of the raising of Lazarus, and the very profusion of specific details shows the significance attributed by the Church to that last miracle performed by the Saviour before His Passion on the Cross. And He Himself obviously prepares it, by delaying and only coming four days after the death of His friend, of whose illness He was aware and about which He warned His disciples "that the Son of God might be glorified thereby" (that is, by this death). He does not conceal this miracle, as He does, for example, the raising of Jairus' daughter, but on the contrary shows it openly, and in front of the whole crowd; just before performing it, He addresses Himself to the Father and says, "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always: but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me" (John xi, 41, 42).

Following the Gospel story, the icon shows that the miracle was performed in the presence of a multitude of people. It could be seen by everyone and the gestures of belief which some of the crowd make show that "many of the Jews which... had seen the things which Jesus did, believed on him." Caves in the rock, like the cave of Lazarus, and the wall of the town of Bethany show that the action takes place in a cemetery outside the city wall.

In the foreground, in front of a group of Apostles, is the Saviour with the sisters of the dead Lazarus, Martha and Mary, at his feet. His aspect is regal and majestic; obeying His order to take away the stone, a man rolls aside the stone which closed the tomb—a detail showing that Lazarus could not come out by himself. Death itself obeys His commanding gesture and His words, "Lazarus, come forth"; and Lazarus, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, that is, as he was laid in the grave according to custom, appears at the mouth of the cave, "by a miracle confirming the miracle". One of those present holds the edge of his grave-clothes, according to the words of the Saviour, "Loose him, and let him go", thus freeing Lazarus from the grave-clothes, of which he could not free himself without others' help. The stench of decomposition still comes from this body after four days in the grave and now returned to life. It compels those who loose him or stand close by to cover their nose and mouth with their clothes. All these details, which inspired faith in many, speak of the fact that this event belongs to the order of phenomena of this world, that here is an ordinary human body, which the will of the Son of God has brought back to continue its life on earth, and that everyone could vouch for the reality of the raising of Lazarus and see him in person.

In accordance with the Gospel story the Divine Service of the festival, connecting the raising of Lazarus with the last days of the Saviour's life on earth and His Resurrection, reveals the inner link between these events, laying particular stress on the simultaneous manifestation in this miracle of the Divine and human nature of the Saviour, which He Himself manifests. "Thou hast wept over Lazarus as a man, and Thou hast raised him as God; Thou hast asked where they had laid him, four days in the grave, confirming, O Lord, Thy

Canon of the Feast, canticle 4

human incarnation." On one side, the question: Where have they laid him? commiseration and tears at the sight of the weeping sisters and friends of Lazarus—manifestations of the human nature of Christ; on the other side, foreknowledge of his death and his raising to life—manifestations of the omniscience and omnipotence of His Divinity, for only God could stop decomposition and reunite the soul and body of a man four days dead. Announcing to His disciples the death of Lazarus, the Saviour says, "And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, to the intent ye may believe" (John xi, 15). As on Mount Tabor He showed His glory to His disciples in His Transfiguration, lest they be tempted when they saw Him crucified, so here also, on His way to voluntary death, He shows Himself a "Vanquisher of death", raising a man four days in the grave, to strengthen thereby faith in His Divine omnipotence and give a pledge to His disciples of His future Resurrection, and to all people—of the general resurrection of the dead. "Since the first fruits of general resurrection is the Resurrection of Christ, by raising Lazarus the Lord gave an assurance of His own Resurrection."[1] Therefore, this miracle was performed not only for the disciples, but also for the people, as testifying to the future fate of all mankind and proof of the general resurrection of the dead. And to prevent any doubts in those who were not present and could not witness the miracle, it is reproduced in all details both in the Gospels and in the icon.

According to the Gospel story the miracle of the raising of Lazarus preceded the solemn entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, which in its turn marked, as it were, the start of His Passion and His ensuing Resurrection, Consequently the Raising of Lazarus, the Saturday of Lazarus, is commemorated on the eve of Palm Sunday. Remembrances of the two events intermingle in the services of the two feasts and the celebration of the Raising of Lazarus merges into the triumph of the Lord's Entry into the capital of Judaea. For this reason, the troparion is the same for both feasts, "O Christ our God, Thou didst raise up Lazarus from the dead, in order to give a pledge for the Universal Resurrection before Thy Passion; wherefore we, like the children, carry the symbols of victory, and cry to Thee, the Vanquisher of Death: Hosanna in the highest; blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

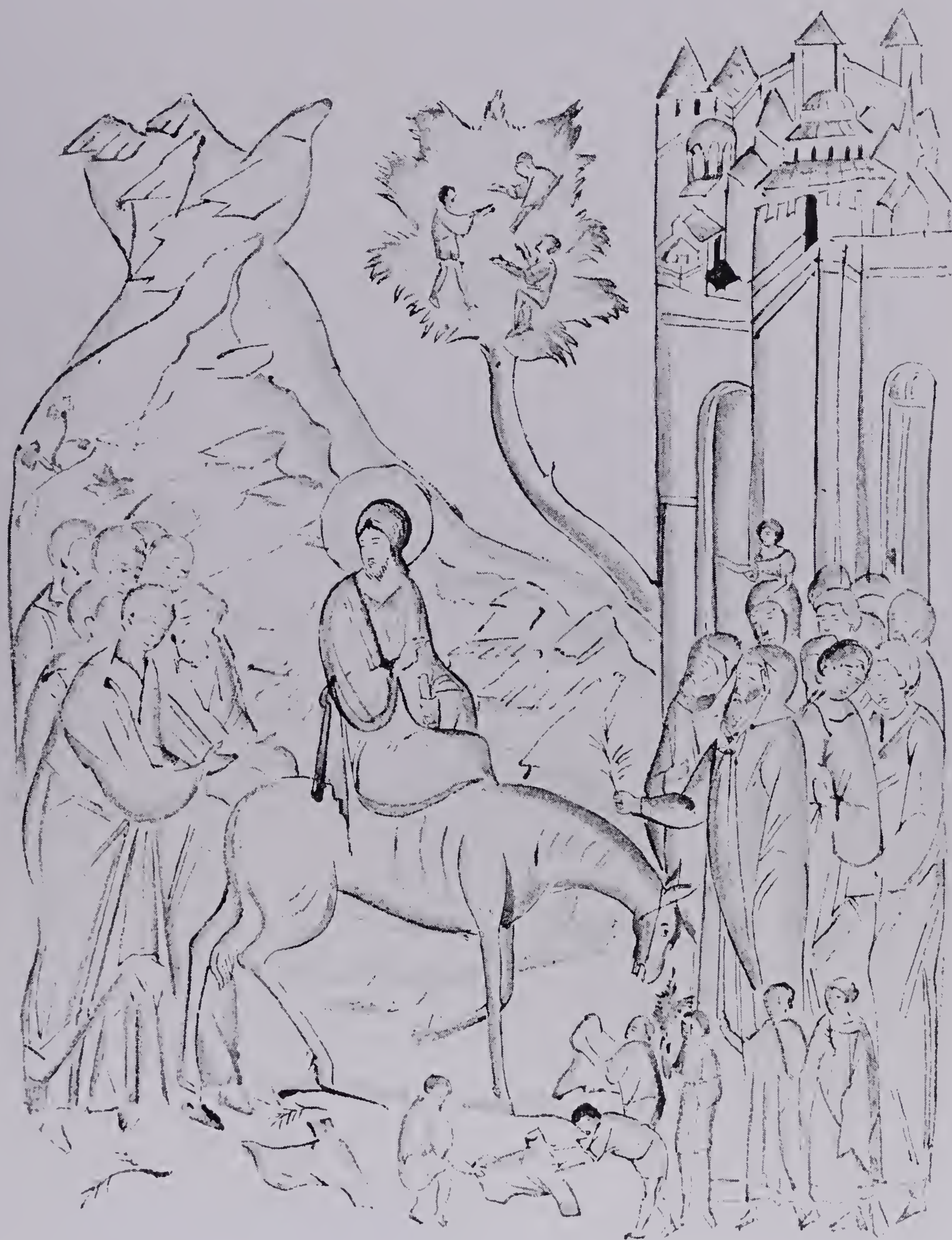
[1] Sergius, Patriarch of Moscow, *The Resurrection of Christ as contrasted with the Raising of Lazarus*. Moscow, 1933.

THE ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

Icons of the Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem are usually distinguished by a very triumphal and festive quality, in keeping with the character of the festival itself, which breaks through the stern and collected mood of the Great Lent and is thus a foretaste of Easter joy. The cheerful appearance of Jerusalem, often red or white, the bright colours of cloaks spread on the road of the procession give the icon a festive look. The group of Apostles and the welcoming crowd, each welded into one collective figure, with the majestic Saviour between them, give the composition a strict equilibrium. The static character of the crowd, emphasised by the sheer wall of the city, the flowing lines of the mountain and the tree which seem to repeat the movement of the Lord and the Apostles and merge into them, give great life to the whole composition.

The immediate cause of the public celebration which accompanied the entry of the Lord into Jerusalem was, according to the Gospel of St. John, the raising of Lazarus, when "much people that were come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees, and went forth to meet him" (John xii, 12, 13). A palm branch is a symbol of joy and feasting. The Jews used them to welcome people of high rank; as a symbol of valour it was also given to reward conquerors. So the crowd gathered at the city gates with palm branches in their hands to welcome the Lord riding a donkey as the Conqueror of death.[1] The Saviour rides sideways, his head slightly turned either towards the Apostles walking behind him, or towards Jerusalem, while His right hand either blesses or points to

the crowd and the city. As a rule children play a great part in icons of the Entry into Jerusalem. Usually they are cutting branches while they sit in the tree, spread garments in the Saviour's way and, together with the adults, welcome Him with palm branches in their hands. Although it is hard to imagine a crowd without children, especially on a feast day, the Evangelists do not mention their presence. Describing the entry into Jerusalem they say that "a very great multitude spread their garments in the way" (Matt. xxi, 8), but do not say they were children. Yet on the icons we see that only children and not adults[2] are spreading garments.[3] The Evangelist Matthew, mentioning the children who welcomed the Lord after His entry into Jerusalem, when He drove the traders out of the temple and cured the sick, explains their role by the words of the Saviour Himself "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou perfected praise" (Ps. viii, 3). On the basis of Tradition the Church ascribes



The Entry into Jerusalem. Design for an icon

to them the same role at the entry itself.[4] This role is emphasised both by the icons and the divine service of the day which gives it the deepest meaning and significance.

The solemn entry into Jerusalem is the fulfilment of the prophecy speaking of Christ as of a coming King. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; proclaim it aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King is coming to thee, just, and a Saviour; he is meek and riding on an ass, and a young foal" (Zech. ix, 9).[5] For the Jews it is something hard to understand: welcoming the mighty Conqueror of death, "Jesus the Prophet", they expected Him to fulfil the prophecies by establishing the Kingdom of Israel upon earth, that is, victory over enemies through their physical annihilation. Actually the reverse was the case: victory over the enemies of Israel was being prepared through their spiritual salvation. Readings on the day of the feast from the Old and New Testaments set right this misunderstanding; they do more—they give warning against it. Thus, after reading prophecies about Christ as a coming King at Vespers, at Matins the Gospel of Matthew is read where the true meaning of the prophecies is revealed by the Words of the Saviour Himself, "All things are delivered unto me of my Father ...", that is, absolute power. There follows an explanation of the meaning of this power (revelation of the Father) and its true nature: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. xi, 27–30). During the Liturgy the Gospel of St. John is read—the symbolical preparation of the Saviour for burial (Mary anointing His feet with ointment) and the description of His entry into Jerusalem (John xii, 1–18). In this way the meaning of the event is gradually unfolded. The Jews who greeted the Saviour with palm branches in their hands did not receive what they expected and renounced what was offered them and a few days later were crying to Pilate "Crucify him!" Therefore the gladness and rejoicing of children who welcomed the Saviour with no ulterior motive, with no thought of gain or earthly power is opposed in the service of that day to the rejoicing of "the Jewish crowd" which expected earthly power. ("... And the children sang Thy praises, while the Jews lawlessly reviled Thee..."—"O evil and adulterous crowd which hath not kept faith with thy husband, why dost thou keep the covenant which thou wilt not inherit; ... Be thou shamed by thy children who sing, 'Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord'."[6]) In icons this idea is transmitted not only by the welcome of the children with palm branches in their hands, but especially by the spreading of garments. The spreading of garments, according to the Bible (4 Kings ix, 13), is the attribute of an anointed king. And since the Saviour is the Anointed whose "kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii, 36) the garments are spread before Him by children instead of by adults, who welcomed Him as the Anointed One for the earthly kingdom.

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 8

Vespers, Palm Sunday, Stich. of Tone 7

Thus the solemn Entry into Jerusalem, which is at the same time the Journey of the Saviour towards voluntary passion and death, is an image of the installation of the King of Glory in His Kingdom. Jerusalem itself is the image of the blessed Kingdom of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is why it is represented on the icon as so festive and attired.

Opposite page: The Entry in Jerusalem, Russian, XVIth century. Private Collection

[1] Since donkeys are little known in many parts of Russia, on many Russian icons a horse replaces the donkey.

[2] Except very occasionally.

[3] This role of the children becomes emphasised very early in the pictures of the Entry, as for instance in the illustrations of the VIth century Rossano Gospels, which already contain a complete iconography of the feast, and still earlier on the Lateran sarcophagi where the composition was more simple. See, for instance, Plate CCCXIII, 4, and CCCXIV, 5, Garucci, *Storia dell'Arte Christiana*, Prato, 1879.

[4] The apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus also speaks of their role.

[5] The beginning of the 3rd Lesson of the Feast (Zech. ix, 9–15). The first lesson is Gen. xlix, 1, 2, 8–12, and the second is the prophecy of Zephaniah iii, 14–19.

[6] This is why on this day the Church blesses branches of trees (hence the name of Palm Sunday) and calls the faithful to greet with them the Saviour riding to His immolation not as the Jews greeted Him but as "the children bearing the sign of victory".


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"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. i, 18). One cannot glorify the triumph of God incarnate, His victory over death—the limit of our fall, without at the same time exalting the Cross of Christ—the limit of the voluntary humiliation ("Kenosis") of the Son of God, who was obedient to the Father "unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. ii, 8). For, "in order that we might live, it was needful that God should incarnate Himself and be put to death".[1] The Incarnation then was effected in order that the eternal Word should become capable of death[2], and Christ Himself declares that He was come "for this cause... unto this hour" (John xii, 27). But this "hour" of the Lord, come to accomplish the work of our salvation, is also the hour of His enemies, that of the "power of darkness" (Luke xxii, 53).[3] In fact, the real victory of Christ was His apparent defeat, for it is by death that He overthrew the power of death. It is this that makes the "scandal" and the "foolishness" of the Cross, "foolishness" outside of which no one can attain the Wisdom of God, that remains for ever incomprehensible to the "princes of this world" (1 Cor. ii, 8). The Cross is then the concrete expression of the Christian mystery, of victory by defeat, of glory by humiliation, of life by death—symbol of an omnipotent God, Who willed to become man and to die as a slave, in order to save His creature. The insignia of Christ's royalty—"I call him King, because I see Him crucified: it belongs to the King to die for His subjects"[4]—the Cross is also the very image of the Redemption, which is the economy of the love of the Trinity towards fallen humanity: "Crucifying Love of the Father, crucified Love of the Son, Love of the Holy Spirit triumphant by the wood of the Cross" (Philaret of Moscow).

It is needless to insist on the place that the Cross holds in the life of Christians: Christ Himself designates it as an attribute that must belong to all who wish to follow Him (Matthew x, 38; xvi, 24; Mark viii, 34; Luke xiv, 27). Manifestation of the "power of God" (1 Cor. i, 18), the sign of the Cross, figuring as the object of worship, or expressed by a gesture, is at the basis of every sacramental practice of the Church. Moreover, representations of the Cross of Christ (sometimes replaced by emblems: anchor, trident, etc.) are known since the earliest Christian antiquity. The iconoclasts, who were implacable against images of the crucifixion, not only spared, but specially propagated decorative representations of the Cross (without the Crucified) in the apses of churches.[5] It can be supposed that representations of the Crucifixion must also go back to a very distant date, if one takes account of the pagan caricature of the graffitti of the Palatine (beginning of the IIIrd century) and, above all, of the gems engraved with the image of Christ on the Cross (IInd and IIIrd centuries). Towards the end of the IVth century, Prudentius, describing in a poem the mural paintings of a church, speaks of a scene of the Crucifixion.[6] In the Vth century we find a well developed composition of the Crucifixion on an ivory in the British Museum and, a century later, on a panel of the cypress-wood door of Santa Sabina at Rome. The fresco of Santa Maria Antiqua, also at Rome (end of VIIth or beginning of VIIIth centuries) approaches the Syrian type of crucifixion such as is found, for example, in the Rabula Gospels (586). Christ is there clothed in a *colobion*, alive, with open eyes, holding Himself upright on the Cross. The Syrian composition follows solely the account of the fourth Gospel: it was long to be maintained in the West. Byzantine iconography was to create a richer type, "systematic and picturesque, symbolical and historical", completing St. John with elements borrowed from the account of the synoptics: the holy women behind Mary, the centurion with the soldiers, pharisees and the crowd behind John. It can be supposed that the synthetic picture of the scene of the Crucifixion, given by St. John Chrysostom in his homily on St. Matthew[7] served as "programme for a living composition" to Byzantine artists.[8] For the Christ clothed in the *colobion*, alive on the Cross, there was to be substituted at Byzantium, about the XIth century, the Christ naked and dead, the head bowed, the body bent. The Patriarch Michael Cerularius remarked, at this time, that one had ceased to represent Christ on the Cross "in a manner contrary to nature", in order to lend Him "the natural human form". But it is precisely against these new representations of the Crucified, which they had been able to see at Con-

stantinople, that the legates of Pope Leo IX protested violently in 1054.[9] The fact was that, before having begun to commiserate the suffering humanity of the Lord, and sometimes pushing naturalism to the extreme in the representation of a Christ dead on the Cross, the West was firmly maintaining the conception of the Crucified living, clothed, impassive and triumphant.

It can be said that Byzantium created a Crucifixion type that is classical by its sense of proportion. Seeking soberness of composition, it rejected little by little the persons at the foot of the Cross, limiting itself to the essential: the Mother of God and St. John, sometimes accompanied by a holy woman and the centurion. It is precisely this composition that we see in our icon, produced by a Russian painter of the XVIth century.

See reproduction on page 182. The Crucifixion Russian, XVIth century. Coll. National Museum, Paris

Christ is represented naked, having only a white cloth which covers his loins. The flexion of the body towards the right, the bowed head, and the closed eyes indicate the death of the Crucified. His face, however, turned towards Mary, preserves a grave expression of majesty in suffering, an expression which makes one think rather of sleep: the body of God-Man remained incorruptible in death. "The Life has fallen asleep and hell shudders in terror."

Holy Saturday, Laudes, Stichira Tone 2

Victory over death and hell is symbolised by a cavern, which opens at the foot of the cross, below the rocky summit of Golgotha, the rock that was rent, at the moment of Christ's death, to allow a skull to appear. It is the skull of Adam who, "according to the belief of some", says St. John Chrysostom[10], would have been buried under Golgotha—"the place of a skull" (John xix, 17). If the tradition of iconography adopted this detail coming from apocryphal sources, it was because it served to bring out the dogmatic meaning of the icon of the Crucifixion: the redemption of the first Adam by the blood of Christ, the New Adam, Who made Himself man to save the human race.

The Cross has eight extremities—a form corresponding to a very ancient tradition, considered as the most authentic one in the East as well as in the West.[11] The upper cross-piece corresponds to the phylactery with the inscription indicating the subject of the accusation. (Pilate's inscription is not reproduced on our icon.) The lower cross-piece is a stool (the *suppedaneum*) to which the feet of Christ were nailed with two nails. Shown horizontal on our icon, the *suppedaneum* of crucifixes and of Russian icons of the Crucifixion is habitually oblique. This inclination of the lower cross-piece, upwards to Christ's right, and downwards to His left, receives a symbolical meaning: justification and damnation of the good and bad robbers.[12]

The architectural background behind the Cross represents the wall of Jerusalem. It is already to be found on the panel of St. Sabina (VIth century). This detail not only corresponds to historical truth, but expresses at the same time a spiritual precept: just as Christ suffered outside the confines of Jerusalem, Christians must follow Him and go without the walls, bearing His reproach, "for here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. xiii, 11–14). The upper part of the Cross, with the arms of Christ extended, is detached against the sky as background. The Crucifixion in an open place denotes the cosmic significance of the death of Christ, which "purified the airs" and freed the entire universe from the domination of the demons.[13]

The composition of the icon is balanced and sober, despite a certain heaviness (the body of the Christ as well as the Cross are too massive). The gestures of the persons present at our Lord's death are restrained and grave. The Mother of God, accompanied by a holy woman, is on the right of Christ. She holds herself upright, drawing closer the mantle on Her shoulder, with a gesture of the left hand, whilst Her right hand is raised towards Christ. Her face expresses a grief contained, dominated by intrepid faith. It seems that in addressing Herself to St. John, who is terrified, the Mother of God calls him to contemplate with Her the mystery of the salvation, which is accomplished in the death of Her Son. The attitude of St. John, bending forwards, expresses anguish and a kind of religious terror: he holds out his left hand towards the Cross, whilst with the right, resting on his face, he seems to wish to close his eyes before the spectacle of the death of his Master. The holy woman and the centurion (without haloes) keep behind the Mother and the disciple. The former has her features con-





tracted with grief, the left hand supporting her cheek in a gesture of lamentation. The latter—a bearded man, with white head-dress—is looking at the Crucified and confesses His Divinity, raising his right hand towards his forehead, as if he wished to cross himself: the fingers are bent in a ritual gesture of benediction. The name of the centurion—Longinos—is noted above his head. The inscription at the top, in capital letters, designates the subject of the icon: Crucifixion of Our Lord Jesus Christ. A scale of warm colours, ranging from pale ochre (the body of Christ, faces and hands of the onlookers) to the red-brown of the cross and the deep purple of the Holy Virgin's mantle, passing through the deep ochre of Golgotha, vermilion (mantle of the holy woman) and light purple (St. John's mantle), contrast very happily with the cold background (the greenish colour of the wall). The long tunics of the two women and of St. John are of a dark green. The sky, of a pale yellow, is the same colour as the frame of the icon.

See reproduction on page 183.
Carved portable Cross, Russian, first half of the XVIth century. 6 x 10½ inches. Coll. L. Vytchegianine, Paris

The second image of the Crucifixion reproduced here is an icon sculptured and coloured, carved in applewood in the form of a cross. It is attributed to the Novgorod school of the end of the XVth or the beginning of the XVIth centuries. The image of the Crucifixion occupies the central part of this portable cross. The Cross, sculptured in the centre, has seven extremities, as the upper cross-piece surmounts the stem. The *suppedaneum* is tilted (a peculiarity of Russian crosses). Below the Cross is the summit of Golgotha, with Adam's head in the cave. In the background is the wall of Jerusalem. The flexion of Christ's body is very accentuated, as well as the inclination of His head, which falls onto His right shoulder. The central cross-piece carries the letters $\overline{\text{IC}}$ $\overline{\text{XC}}$. Above are the initials of Pilate's inscription: Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews. But higher up, on the upper cross-piece one reads: King of Glory. The Divinity of Christ dead on the Cross is also indicated by the presence of two angels with cloths in their hands, flying from either side of the upper crossbar. Often on icons of the Crucifixion one also sees, in the two upper corners, the sun and the moon (or day and night), representing the visible world terrified by the death of the Creator. This detail is very ancient, for it is found in the Rabula Gospels. On our cross the frame of the upper branch is occupied by an icon of the Holy Trinity (three angels appearing to Abraham). It is the Divine Council presiding over the economy of our salvation which is accomplished on the Cross, in the death of the incarnate Son. The scene of the Crucifixion includes four onlookers: the Mother of God with a holy woman (to the left of the spectator), St. John and the centurion (to the right), whose attitudes and gestures recall those of the preceding icon. These four figures, of reduced size (above all in relation to the Christ, Who is twice as large), are placed on the central level of the icon of the Crucifixion, beneath Christ's outstretched arms. At the base of the same icon, on either side of Golgotha, two persons of even smaller size represent two great Russian ascetics—St. Sergius of Radonej and St. Cyril of Bielozersk, in attitudes of adoration before the Cross. In the two arms of the crucifix, behind the four onlookers, six larger figures follow them in succession. They are the two Archangels, Michael and Gabriel, holding staves and spheres, and four Apostles. St. Michael is in the right arm of the cross, behind the holy woman; he is followed by St. Paul and St. John who is represented with a beard, in contrast to the young beardless St. John of the central composition. In the left arm of the cross, St. Gabriel is accompanied by St. Peter and St. Andrew. The latter, as is known, was considered as the Apostle of Byzantium and of Russia. Below the image of the Crucifixion, in the neck of the cross, two frames, one above the other, each contain three images of holy bishops. The upper one is the icon of the "Three Doctors": St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory of Nazianzus, called the Theologian. Below are the three great bishops of the Russian Church: St. Alexis and St. Peter of Moscow and St. Leontius of Rostov. It can be deduced that this cross was made before the canonisation of St. Jonas (1547), the third metropolitan saint of Moscow, celebrated with Saints Peter and Alexis.

Our crucifix is a beautiful piece of sculpture in wood, with the smallest details carefully worked. The colours are vivid. The frames are painted red with a green border. The com-

plicated composition shows careful systematisation: the Holy Trinity, Archangels, Apostles, Fathers of the Church—the whole Church, and, in particular, local saints, those of the Russian Church, are present at the Crucifixion of the Lord, each element in the position belonging to it. The sculptor showed a very exact dogmatic and artistic sense in creating this beautiful whole, inscribed within the form of the cross.

[1] St. Gregory of Nazianzus, Or. 45, n. 28; P.G. 36, col. 661c: ἐδεήθημεν Θεοῦ σαρκομένου καὶ νεκρουμένου.

[2] St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation of the Word, n. 20. P.G. 25, col. 132BC.

[3] On the hour of the Lord, see L. Bouyer, *Le Mystère pascal* (Ed. du Cerf, 1945), pp. 71–78.

[4] St. John Chrysostom, De cruce et latrone, Hom. II; P.G. 49, col. 413.

[5] G. Millet, *Les iconoclastes et la croix*, in *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique*, XXXIV (1910), 96–110.

[6] Dittochaeum. P.L. 60, col. 108.

[7] Hom. 87; P.G. 57–58, coll. 769–774.

[8] G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'Evangile*, p. 426.

[9] Hefele-Leclerq, *Hist. des Conciles*, IV, 2, p. 1106.

[10] On St. John, Homily 85, 1; P.G. 59, col. 459.

[11] In the XIIIth century Pope Innocent III recognised it again in a sermon: *Sermo in communi de uno martyre*. P.L. 217, col. 612B.

[12] Octoichos, Tone 8, Wednesday matins: the Cross is compared to a balance of justice.

[13] St. Athanasius, On the Incarnation, c. 25; P.G. 25, col. 140AC. St. John Chrysostom, De cruce et latrone, Hom. 2; P.G. 49, coll. 408–409.

THE RESURRECTION

The Resurrection of Christ, or Easter, does not enter into the cycle of the twelve principal feast days of the Church. "With us", says St. Gregory the Theologian, "it is the feast of feasts and the celebration of celebrations; it excels all other festivals, as the sun excels the stars; and this is true not only of human and earthly feasts, but also of those belonging to Christ and celebrated for Christ."[1] This greatest of all feasts of the Church is singled out among other feasts as the highest manifestation of Christ's omnipotence, the confirmation of faith and token of our own resurrection. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain" (1 Cor. xv, 17) says Apostle Paul.

Christian iconography knows several representations of the Resurrection of Christ. In early Christian times it used the Old Testament prefiguration of the event, namely, the Prophet Jonah coming out of the whale's belly.[2] However, even in very early days, there appears the historical representation of the Resurrection of Christ, based on the Gospel story—the appearance of the angel to the women bringing spices to the sepulchre. According to certain data, it existed already in the IIIrd century (the Church in Dura Europos, 232).[3] The iconographic type concerning the Resurrection of Christ that comes next in time is the Descent into Hell. The earliest known representation of this, belongs to the VIth century, and is to be found on one of the ciborium columns of St. Mark's in Venice. These two latter compositions are used in the Orthodox Church as the Easter icons. In traditional Orthodox iconography the actual moment of the Resurrection of Christ was never depicted. Unlike their treatment of the Raising of Lazarus, both the Gospels and the Church Tradition are silent about that moment and do not say how Christ arose. Neither does the icon show it.[4]

This silence clearly expresses the difference which exists between the two events. The raising of Lazarus was a miracle, which could be perceived by all; whereas the Resurrection of Christ



was inaccessible to any perception. In the 6th Canticle of the Easter canon the Church draws a definite parallel between the Resurrection of Christ and His Nativity.

"Having preserved the seals intact, O Christ, Thou hast arisen from the tomb, and having left unbroken the seals of the immaculate Virgin in Thy Nativity, Thou hast opened to us the gates of Paradise." Just like His birth from the Virgin, the Resurrection of Christ is here glorified as an ineffable mystery, inaccessible to all inquiry. "Not only was the stone not removed from the sepulchre, but the seals on it were left intact when Christ arose and 'life shone forth from the tomb' while yet the 'tomb was sealed'. The resurrected Christ came forth from the tomb just as He came in to the Apostles—through 'shut doors', which He did not open; He came out of the tomb with no outer signs that a bystander could observe."[5] The unfathomable character of this event for the human mind, and the consequent impossibility of depicting it, is the reason for the absence of icons of the Resurrection itself. This is why in Orthodox iconography there are, as we have said, two images corresponding to the meaning of this event and supplementing one another. One is a conventionally symbolical representation. It depicts the moment preceding the Resurrection of Christ in the flesh—the Descent into Hell; the other—the moment following the Resurrection of the body of Christ, the historical visit of the spice-bearers to Christ's sepulchre.

THE DESCENT INTO HELL

Opposite page: Russian, XVth century. 21 x 16 inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

In the teaching of the Church, the Descent into Hell is indissolubly connected with the Redemption. Since Adam was dead, the abasement of the Saviour, Who had assumed his nature, had to reach the same depths to which Adam had descended. In other words, the descent into hell represents the very limit of Christ's degradation and, at the same time, the beginning of His glory. Although the Evangelists say nothing of this mysterious event, Apostle Peter speaks of it, both in his Divinely-inspired words on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii, 14–39), and in the third chapter of his first Epistle (1 Peter iii, 19), "He went and preached unto the spirits in prison". Christ's victory over hell, the deliverance of Adam and of the righteous men of the Old Testament is the main theme of the Divine Service of Great Saturday; it runs through all the Easter service and is inseparable from the glorification of Christ's Resurrection in the flesh. This theme is, as it were, interwoven with the theme of Resurrection. "Thou hast descended into the abyss of the earth, O Christ, and hast broken down the eternal doors which imprison those who are bound, and, like Jonah after three days inside the whale, Thou hast risen from the tomb."

Irmos of Ode 6 of the Easter canon

Following the texts of divine services, the icon of the Descent into Hell expresses the spiritual, transcendental reality of the Resurrection—the descent of our Lord's soul into hell—and reveals the purpose and results of this descent. In harmony with the meaning of the event, the action in the icon takes place in the very depths of the earth, in hell, shown as a gaping black abyss. In the centre of the icon, standing out sharply by His posture and colours, is the Saviour. The author of the Easter canon, St. John of Damascus, says "Although Christ died as a man and His holy soul departed from His pure body, His Divinity remained inseparable from both—I mean both soul and body."[6] Therefore He appears in hell not as its captive, but as its Conqueror, the Deliverer of those imprisoned therein; not as a slave but as the Master of life. He is depicted in the icon with a radiant halo, symbol of glory, usually of various shades of blue, and often spangled with stars round the outer edge and pierced with rays issuing from Him. His garments are no longer those in which He is portrayed during

His service on earth. They are of a golden-yellow hue, made luminous throughout by thin golden rays ("assiste") painted upon them. The darkness of hell is filled by the light of these Divine rays—the light of glory of Him Who being God-Man, descended therein. It is already the light of the coming Resurrection, the rays and dawn of the coming Easter. The Saviour tramples underfoot the two crossed leaves of hell's doors, that He has pulled down. On many icons, below the doors, in the black abyss, is seen the repellent, cast down figure of the prince of darkness, Satan. In later icons are seen here also a number of varied details:—the power of hell destroyed—broken chains with which angels are now binding Satan, keys, nails and so forth. In His left hand Christ holds a scroll—symbol of the preaching of the Resurrection in hell, in accordance with the words of Apostle Peter. Sometimes, instead of the scroll He holds a cross, no longer the shameful instrument of punishment, but the symbol of victory over death. Having torn asunder the bonds of hell by His omnipotence, with His right hand Christ raises Adam from the grave (following Adam, our ancestress Eve rises with hands joined in prayer); that is, He frees Adam's soul and with it the souls of all those who wait for His coming with faith. This is why, to right and left of this scene, are shown two groups of Old Testament saints, with prophets at their head. On the left are king David and king Solomon in royal robes and crowns, and behind them John the Forerunner; on the right—Moses with the tablets of the Law in his hand. Seeing the Saviour descended into hell, they at once recognise Him and are pointing out to others Him of Whom they had prophesied and Whose coming they had foretold.[7]

The descent into hell was the last step made by Christ on the way of His abasement. By the very fact of "descending into the abyss of the earth" He opened to us the access to heaven. By freeing the old Adam, and with him the whole of mankind from slavery to him who is the incarnation of sin, darkness and death, He laid the foundation of a new life for those who have united with Christ into a new reborn mankind. Thus the spiritual raising of Adam is represented in the icon of the Descent into Hell as a symbol of the coming resurrection of the body, the first-fruit of which was the Resurrection of Christ. Therefore, although this icon expresses the meaning of the event commemorated on Great Saturday and is brought out for worship on that day, it is, and is called, an Easter icon, as a prefiguration of the coming celebration of the Resurrection of Christ and therefore of the future resurrection of the dead.

[1] Easter Sermon 45; P.G. 36, col. 624.

[2] This representation is found in Roman catacombs, beginning with the second century, as for instance in the catacombs of Priscilla and Callixtus.

[3] American Journal of Archeology, vol. LI, no. 4, 1947. K. Weitzmann, *Byzantine Art and Scholarship in America.*

[4] Although the subject of Christ arising is of Byzantine origin, it is found in ancient Orthodox iconography only in illustrations, and even then extremely rarely, as for instance in the Chludov Psalter of the IXth century, illustrated by Greeks (illustration to the words of Ps. ix, 12, "Arise, O Lord God. let thy hand be lifted up"). In Russian iconography it appeared when decadence began to set in, towards the end of the XVIth century, under the influence of the religious art of the West, where this theme had acquired wide popularity, starting with the epoch of the Renaissance. It should be noted, however, that the similarity between the illustrations in the Chludov Psalter and the Western images is a similarity only of idea, but not of form. As regards Russian icon-painters, it is obvious that they found it hard to take a step so openly in contradiction with the Gospel texts. With few exceptions, these representations have a more reserved character than those found in Western religious art. The Saviour is represented traditionally in the same garments as in the Descent into Hell. The soldiers are either absent or represented as asleep. This subject is most often found in multiple Easter icons, consisting of a whole series of images relating to the Resurrection; or else it appears on the same panel as the Descent into Hell, but to one side, as a complementary image.

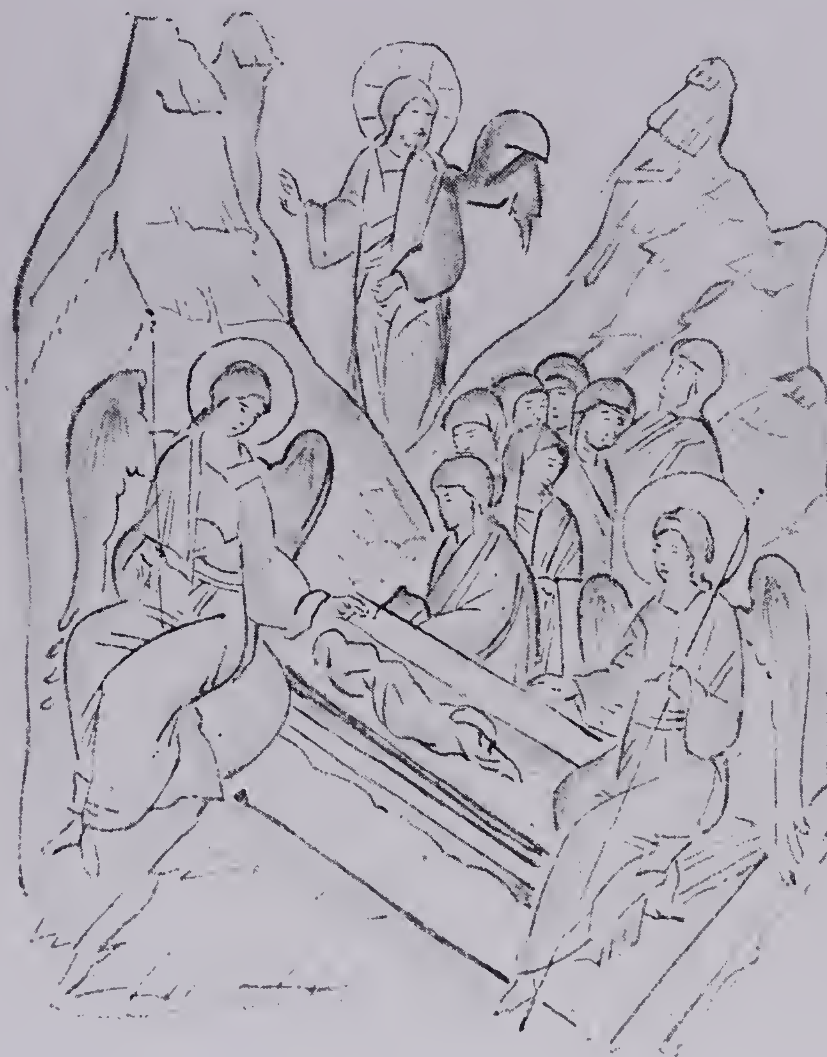
[5] Sergius, Patriarch of Moscow, *The Resurrection of Christ as contrasted with the raising of Lazarus.* Moscow, 1933.

[6] *On the Orthodox Faith*, III, c. 27; P.G. 94, col. 1097A.

[7] A remarkable description of this scene is to be found in the apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus.

THE SPICE-BEARING WOMEN AT THE SEPULCHRE

"...When He had freed those who were bound from the beginning of time, Christ returned again from among the dead, having opened for us the way to resurrection" says St. John of Damascus.[1] This return from among the dead, this mystery of the Resurrection of Christ, which is beyond comprehension, is expressed by the icon of "The Spice-bearing Women at the Sepulchre" in the same way as the Gospels describe it, that is, it depicts what was seen by those who came to the Sepulchre. The Gospel of St. Matthew, describing the Resurrection of Christ, gives us to understand that the women who came to the Sepulchre witnessed an earthquake, saw an angel descend from heaven and roll back the stone from the door, and saw the fear of the watch (Matt. xxviii, 1–4). But neither they nor still less the keepers were witnesses of Christ's Resurrection itself. According to the Gospel, the angel removed the stone from the doors of the Sepulchre, not to enable the risen Christ to come out, as had to be done in the raising of Lazarus, but "on the contrary, to show that He was no longer in the sepulchre (that the sepulchre was empty) 'He is not here: for he is risen', and to enable those who sought 'Jesus, which was crucified' to see with their own eyes the empty sepulchre, 'the place where the Lord lay'. This means that the Resurrection had already taken place before the descent of the angel and before the stone was rolled away: it was an event inaccessible to any eye and beyond all comprehension."[2] In accordance with the Gospel story, the icon represents the burial cave in which are the empty sepulchre with the linen cloth lying there. Beside it stands the group of spice-bearing women and on the stone sit either one or two angels in white garments, showing the women the place where the body of Jesus had lain. The composition of this icon is usually very simple and might even be called ordinary, if it were not for the winged figures of the angels in snow-white garments, which give to the icon an impression of austere and calm solemnity.[3] As is well known, the Evangelists speak differently both of the number of the spice-bearers and the number of angels. Therefore,



Design for an icon.
See note 3 on page 192




IC XC

See reproduction on page 190. The Spicebearing Women at the Tomb, Russian, XVIth century [?]. Photo: Castle De Wijenburgh, Echteld, Netherlands

depending on which Gospel story is the basis of the composition, their number in the icon is changed. These differences do not constitute a contradiction. Fathers of the Church, for example St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Gregory Palamas, consider that spice-bearing women came to the sepulchre several times and each time their number was different; thus each Evangelist speaks only of one of these visits. In the Gospel of St. Luke their number is not given at all. This explains why in certain icons their number rises to five, six and more. However, in the majority of icons their number does not exceed that indicated in the Gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark; that is, two women are represented according to the one, and three according to the other. In the same way, icons either show one angel in accordance with the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, or two, in accordance with Luke and John "the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain" (John xx, 12). Generally speaking, this Easter icon, while bearing testimony of the accomplished Resurrection, is an exact reproduction of the Gospel stories, down to the smallest details, "And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself" (John xx, 7). This seemingly insignificant detail emphasises still more the incomprehensible character of the event which had taken place. Indeed, it is precisely after seeing the linen clothes that "that other disciple... saw, and believed" (John xx, 8). For the fact that they had retained the form they had had when covering the entombed body, that is, wrapped together, was an infallible proof that the body contained in them was not stolen away (Matt. xxviii, 13), but had left them in an inexplicable manner.

Christ's Resurrection took place on the morning after the seventh day—the Sabbath, that is at the beginning of the first day of the week. Therefore the first day of the week is celebrated in the Christian world as the beginning of the new life, which shone forth from the grave.[4] The first Christians called this day not the first but the eighth[5], "since it is the first of the number that follows, and the eighth of the number which precedes it—the day which is highest of the high".[6] It is not only a commemoration of the day on which the Resurrection of Christ took place historically, but is also the beginning and prefiguration of the future eternal life for the renewed creature—what the Church calls the eighth day of creation. For, as the first day of creation was the beginning of days in time, so the day of the Resurrection of Christ is the beginning of days outside time, that is, an indication of the mystery of the future life, the Kingdom of the Holy Spirit, where God is "all in all".

[1] *On the Orthodox Faith*, III, c. 29; P.G. 94, col. 1101 A.

[2] Patriarch Sergius, ibid.

[3] Later, in the XVIIth century, another composition, also ancient, was combined with the former, namely, the appearance of Christ to Mary Magdalene. This addition is evidently connected with the appearance of Western images of Christ arising from the grave. In response to the need to see the risen Christ, icon-painters found a means of representing Him in an icon without contradicting the Gospel story. Thus two moments are represented in one composition. The spice-bearers, standing nearer to the sepulchre, listen to the words of the angel, while Mary Magdalene looks round and sees the Lord, Who stands in the centre of the icon, among small hills. Moreover, since Mary Magdalene had taken Him for an ordinary man, a gardener, His glorified state is not indicated in any way and He is depicted in the usual garments He wore before the Resurrection.

[4] In Russian Sunday is called "Resurrection".

[5] Tertullian, *On idolatry;* P.L. I, coll. 682–683.

[6] St. Gregory the Theologian. P.G. 36, col. 612 C.

Mid-Pentecost (Wednesday of the fourth week after Easter), by the place which it occupies between the Resurrection of Christ and the Descent of the Holy Spirit, is clothed in a "double splendour" which is appropriate to "the root of the two great solemnities". Like the majority of "the festivals of an idea", this mysterious festival of grace (still unknown in the West) must go back to a fairly ancient time. In fact, the actual service of Mid-Pentecost, apart from more recent sticherai (of the early VIIIth century), contains liturgical elements which some would attribute to St. Elias of Jerusalem (494–513) or to St. Anatolius of Constantinople (449–458).

MID-PENTECOST

See reproduction on page 191. Russian, Novgorod school, XVth century. 16½ x 21 inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

The Gospel reading of Mid-Pentecost (John vii, 14–36), starting with the words: "Now about the midst of the feast (*τῆς ἑορτῆς μεσούσης*) Jesus went up into the temple, and taught", is related to the event which took place "in the midst" of the feast of Tabernacles. Celebrated in autumn (Sept.–Oct.) for seven or eight days, the Jewish feast of Tabernacles was therefore quite distinct from that of Pentecost. If the Jewish "Mid-Tabernacles" is recalled at the time of the Christian Mid-Pentecost, it is because the words of Christ, namely "the last day, that great day of the feast" (John vii, 37–39), referred to the coming of the Holy Spirit, which had to take place after the Passion and glorification of the Lord. The Gospel reading of Pentecost (John vii, 37–53) starts where that of Mid-Pentecost ends and contains the promise of the Holy Spirit under the image of "rivers of living water". This theme of "living water", symbol of grace, serves as *leit-motif* to the office of Mid-Pentecost and justifies the pentecostal transposition of the feast of Tabernacles.

Ode 5 of the Canon

Unlike the liturgy, the iconography of Mid-Pentecost does not seem to have developed the theme of water. It remains very restrained, showing us Christ in the temple addressing the word to the elders of the people. He is not standing, as on the last day of the festival, when He spoke of the living water, but seated in the centre, on a semi-circular seat. In our icon, six old men with linen headgear, seated three by three on either side of Christ, form two well-balanced groups. Their attitude expresses astonishment, which makes one think that the icon aims at illustrating simply a passage from the Gospel for the day: "How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?" (John vii, 15). This is true of the fresco of Mid-Pentecost in the church of St. Theodore Stratilate at Novgorod (XIVth century), in which a bearded Christ is preaching seated in the midst of the elders of the people. But our icon is not a simple illustration of the Gospel text referring to the event of "the midst of the feast" of Tabernacles. In fact, Christ Who has clearly the air of teaching (the gesture of the right hand and a "rotulus" in the left) is represented with the features of a beardless adolescent, such as He must have been at the age of twelve when, seated in the temple among the doctors, He astonished them for the first time by His wisdom (Luke ii, 41–50). One finds the same Christ-Emmanuel teaching, for example in the Byzantine illuminations of the illustrated Gospel of the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris (Gr. 74, f° 98, XIth or early XIIth century) in connection with the account of Christ's childhood in St. Luke. However, in our icon one does not see Mary and Joseph, as in the Gr. 74 codex. If the features of the Christ-Emmanuel in the icon of Mid-Pentecost recall the first manifestation of His Divine Wisdom in the temple of Jerusalem related by St. Luke, this is not a substitute for the last declaration of the Messiah, made in the same temple, but is designed to make a link connecting the beginning and the end, and demonstrating the unity of the teaching of the Son of God, sent into the world by the Father (Luke ii, 49: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"—and Ode 5 of the Canon of Mid-Pentecost: "Thou hast spoken in the temple, O Christ, before the assembly of the Jews, manifesting Thy glory and declaring Thy relation with the Father"). The type Emmanuel emphasises the non-temporal aspect belonging to Christ, whilst bearing witness to the truth of the Incarnation: the Word incarnate knew the age of childhood and adolescence. At all ages of His earthly life, Christ remains this same hypostatical Wisdom of the Father which was made manifest for the first time to the doctors of the Law during His adolescence. The Christ-Emmanuel of the icon of Mid-Pentecost corresponds to the hymns of this festival which speak of "the Wisdom of God"—*ἡ Σοφία τοῦ Θεοῦ*—come into the midst of the festival to promise the water of immortality.[1]

See reproduction on page 194.

Lesson for the festival of the Circumcision



Christ as a child among the scribes. From a Greek manuscript of the XIth century in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Grec 74, fol. 98).

Our icon, which is of the XVth century, belongs to the best traditions of the Novgorod school. Its beautiful composition is clear and sober, with Christ in the centre, standing out against an architectural background, and the two groups of old men, whose gestures express a restrained emotion, emphasise still more the majestic calm of the Adolescent teaching. The same care for sobriety is noticeable in the colours: the "glorious" clothing of the Emmanuel in ochre with gold hatching, the three colours in the garments of the old men—vermilion, purple and green—the white headgear, as also the white background of the wall behind Christ, give an impression of richness created with a strict economy of colours.

[1] Automelon of Tone I and Ode 8 of the Canon of Andrew of Crete. P.G. 97, col. 1432 A.

THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

The feast of the Ascension is the feast of salvation consummated. The whole process of salvation: birth, passion, death and resurrection are completed in the Ascension. "When Thou hadst fulfilled for us Thy dispensation, and united the things in earth with the things in Heaven, Thou, O Christ our God, didst ascend into glory, in no wise being parted from those that love Thee, but Thou didst remain with them inseparably and proclaim to them: I am with you, no one is against you." As an expression of the meaning of this festival, the theme of the Ascension used to be placed in the dome of ancient churches, thus completing the scheme of paintings they contained.

Kontakion of the Festival

The first glance at Orthodox icons of this feast creates the impression that they do not quite correspond to their name. The principal place in them is given to a group consisting of the Mother of God, angels and apostles, whereas the principal figure, the ascending Saviour Himself, is almost always much smaller than the other persons depicted and is as it were secondary in relation to them. Yet in this very disparity Orthodox icons of the Ascension conform to the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, in reading accounts of our Lord's Ascension in the Gospels and the Acts one is left with the same impression of lack of correspondence between this event and its descriptions. The fact of the Ascension itself is given there only a few words.[1] The accounts of the Evangelists concentrate all their attention on something else—on the last precepts of the Saviour, establishing and defining the role and significance of the Church in the world and its connection and relationship with God. The Acts of the Apostles give a more detailed description of the Ascension. This description, together with the account in the Gospel of St. Luke, constitute the factual data (though not all of them) which lie at the basis of Orthodox iconography of Christ's Ascension. The centre of gravity in the accounts of the Holy Scriptures and consequently of the iconography, lies not in the fact of the Ascension itself, but in the significance and consequences it has for the Church and the world.

Opposite page: The Ascension, Russian, XVIth century. The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, Mass.

According to the Holy Scriptures (Acts i, 12) the Ascension of our Lord took place on Mount Olivet, or the Mount of Olives. Therefore in the icon the action takes place either at the summit of the mount, as is the case in the icon reproduced here, or in a hilly landscape. To designate the Mount of Olives, some olive trees are at times depicted. In accordance with the special service of the festival, the Saviour Himself is represented as ascending in glory[2], sometimes sitting on a richly ornamented throne.[3] In iconography His Glory is represented as a mandorla, oval or round, composed of several concentric circles, the symbol of the high



heavens. Graphically this idea is conveyed by means of an image of the visible sky as the ancients saw it, which corresponds also to our modern conception of it as consisting of several spheres (troposphere, stratosphere, ionosphere). This symbolism shows that the ascending Saviour abides outside the earthly plane of existence and through this the moment of Ascension acquires a character that is outside time and so gives a quite special meaning to its details, taking them outside the narrow limits of an historical event. The mandorla is supported by angels (their number can vary). Naturally, the presence of angels supporting the mandorla is not due to necessity, since the Saviour ascended by His own Divine power and had no need of their assistance. They, as well as the mandorla, are merely the expression of His glory and greatness.[4]

In the foreground, with the Mother of God in the centre, we see two groups of apostles and two angels. Here the role of the angels is different: as we know from the Acts of the Apostles, they are messengers of Divine Providence.

The presence at the Lord's Ascension of the Mother of God, of which there is no direct mention in the Holy Scriptures, is categorically affirmed by the Tradition passed on in the texts of the Divine service, such as the 9th canticle of the Canon: "Rejoice, Thou Mother of Christ our God, seeing with the apostles Him whom Thou didst engender ascending to heaven, and glorifying Him." In the icons of the Ascension the Mother of God occupies a very special position. Placed directly below the ascending Saviour, She is as it were the axis of the whole composition. Her outline, of wonderful purity and lightness, clear and precise, stands out sharply from the background of the white garments of the angels. Her severe immobility contrasts no less sharply with the animated and gesticulating Apostles standing on either side of Her. Her importance is often emphasised by Her standing on higher ground, which singles out still more Her central position. This group, with the Mother of God in the centre, represents our Saviour's inheritance, gained by His blood—the Church He was physically leaving behind on earth, which, through the promised descent of the Holy Spirit at the coming Pentecost, would receive all the fulness of its being. The link between the Ascension and Pentecost is revealed in the words of the Saviour Himself: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you" (John xvi, 7). This link between the ascension of the deified human body of the Saviour and the coming Pentecost—the beginning of the deification of man through the descent of the Holy Spirit—is emphasised by the whole Divine service of the festival. The place of this group—the Church—in the foreground of the icon is a graphic expression of the significance and role which, as we have said earlier, the Holy Scriptures attribute to the establishment of the Church in the last commandments of the Saviour. The fact that what is meant here is indeed the Church in its full complement and not only the people who were historically present at the Ascension, is shown by the presence of Apostle Paul (at the head of the group on the left of the spectator), who historically could not have been there with the other Apostles, as well as by the significance of the Mother of God. She who had taken God into Herself, who had become the temple of the incarnate Word, is the personification of this Church—the body of Christ, whose Head is the ascending Christ. "... and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i, 22, 23). Therefore, as the personification of the Church, the Mother of God is placed immediately below the ascending Christ and in the icon they supplement one another. Her gesture always corresponds to Her significance in the icons of the Ascension. In some it is the gesture of orison—the ancient gesture of prayer—uplifted hands, expressing Her role and the role of the Church She personifies in relation to God, connection with Him through prayer, intercession for the world. In other icons it is the gesture of profession of faith, expressing the role of the Church in relation to the world. In that case She, like the martyrs, holds Her hands palms outwards before Her breast. Her severe stillness seems to express the immutability of the revealed truth, whose keeper is the Church. The groups of the apostles and the diversity of their gestures express the multitude and variety of tongues and means of expressing that truth.

The direction of movement of the whole group in the foreground, the gestures both of the angels and the apostles, the focus of their eyes and postures, everything is directed upwards (sometimes some of the apostles turn towards each other or towards the Mother of God) towards the Source of the life of the Church, its Head Who abides in heaven. It is as it were a graphic representation of the appeal which the Church addresses on that day to its members: "Come, let us rise and turn our eyes and thoughts on high, concentrating our looks as well as our feelings... let us imagine ourselves to be on the Mount of Olives and to look at the Redeemer borne on clouds." By these words the Church invites the faithful to join the apostles in their transport towards the ascending Christ, for, as St. Leo the Great says, "The Ascension of Christ is our elevation, and whither the glory of the Head has preceded by anticipation, the hope of the body too is called."[5]

Ikos and Kontakion, Tone 6

The ascending Saviour Himself, leaving the earthly world in the flesh, does not abandon it in His Divinity, does not desert the inheritance gained by His blood—the Church, "in no wise being parted... but remaining with them inseparably". "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii, 20). These words of the Saviour refer both to the whole history of the Church in its totality and to each separate moment of its existence and to the life of each member of it until the Second Coming. This is why the gesture of the Saviour is directed towards the group in the foreground whom He is leaving behind and towards the external world. The icon conveys this connection of His with the Church, by always depicting Him as blessing with His right hand (He very seldom blesses with both hands) and usually holding in His left hand the Gospels or a scroll—the symbol of the teacher, of preaching. He ascended blessing, not having blessed ("While he blessed them, he was parted from them..." Luke xxiv, 51), and His blessing does not cease with His Ascension. Depicting Him in the act of blessing, the icon shows graphically that even after the Ascension He remains the source of blessing for the apostles, and through them for their successors and for all those whom they bless. As we have said, in the left hand the Saviour holds the Gospels or a scroll, the symbol of the teacher, of preaching. By this the icon shows that the Lord, while dwelling in heaven, remains not only the source of blessing but also the source of knowledge, communicated to the Church by the Holy Spirit. The inner link between Christ and the Church is expressed in the icon by the whole structure of the composition linking together into one whole the group on earth with its consummation in heaven. Apart from the meaning of this group's movement, already mentioned, its direction towards the Saviour and His gesture, directed towards it, express their inner inter-relation and the indivisibility of the common life of the Head and the Body. Both the upper and the lower parts of the icon, the earthly and the heavenly, are inalienable from one another and one without the other loses its meaning.

Moreover, icons of the Ascension have yet another aspect.

The two angels standing behind the Mother of God and pointing towards the Saviour announce to the apostles that the ascended Christ will come again in glory "in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven" (Acts i, 11). "The Acts of the Apostles mention two angels", says St. John Chrysostom, "because there actually were two, and there were two because only the testimony of two is established (2 Cor. xiii, 1)."[6] Relating the actual fact of the Saviour's Ascension and the teaching of the Church, the icon of the Ascension is thus at the same time also a prophetic icon, foretelling the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in glory. This is why on icons of the Last Judgment He is depicted as on the icons of the Ascension, this time however not as the Redeemer but as the Judge of the universe. In this prophetic aspect of the icon the group of the apostles with the Mother of God in the centre represents the image of the Church waiting for the Second Coming. Being, as we have said, a prophetic icon, an icon of the Second Coming, it unfolds before us a grandiose picture starting with the Old Testament and ending with the culmination of the history of the world.

It should be noted that in spite of the many facets of meaning contained in the icon of the Ascension, its distinctive feature is the unusually collected, as it were monolithic, quality



of its composition, which is especially striking in our icon. The iconography of this festival, in the form adopted in the Orthodox Church, belongs to the most ancient iconographies of sacred festivals. Some of the earliest representations of the Ascension, which had already acquired a definite form, belong to the Vth or VIth centuries (ampullae of Monza and the Rabula Gospels). Ever since then the iconography of this festival has remained unchanged except for secondary details.



Iconography of the Ascension on an Ampulla of Monza, VIth century (after Carucci, 434,4).

[1] Of the Evangelists only Mark and Luke speak of it; moreover the first merely states it, while the second gives a precise but very brief description.

[2] "Thou, O Christ our God, hast ascended in glory..." Troparion of the Festival.

[3] "On the throne of glory carried to God" (Canticle, Tone 1, On Praise).

[4] Generally speaking the role of the angels here may be different and varies in accordance with the texts from the Divine service upon which a particular icon is based. For example, in some icons they do not touch the mandorla, but turn in prayerful attitudes towards the Saviour, expressing wonder "seeing man's nature ascending with Him" (Canon of the Festival, canticle 3); on other icons they are depicted blowing trumpets in accordance with the words of the antiphon, "God is gone up with a shout, the Lord with a sound of a trumpet" (Antiphon. Stich. 4; Ps. xlvi, 5). On the upper part of the icon, above the mandorla, there are sometimes depicted the gates of heaven, opening before the ascending King of glory in accordance with the words of Psalm xxiii, repeated during the service, "Lift up your gates, ye princes; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in." These details express the connection of this event with the Old Testament, indicating the fulfilment of David's prophecy of the Ascension of the Lord.

[5] St. Leo the Great, Discourse 73. First text on the Ascension. P.L. 54, col. 396.

[6] St. John Chrysostom, Discourse on the Acts of the Apostles, par. 3; P.G. 60, col. 30.

ICONS OF PENTECOST

The festival of Pentecost is of Old Testament origin. It was celebrated to commemorate the giving of the law on Mount Sinai—God making a solemn covenant with His chosen people—and at the same time as a thanksgiving for the first-fruits of the earth (Numbers xxviii, 26) and the new harvest (Ex. xxiii, 16). It was celebrated at the conclusion of seven weeks, on the fiftieth day after the Passover and so was called the feast of Weeks (Deut. xvi, 9–10). On this day of the revelation of the law, being also the fiftieth day after the Resurrection of Christ, the Holy Spirit descended on His Apostles and disciples by Divine Providence and in accordance with the Saviour's promise (John xiv, 26). This descent of the Holy Spirit was the making of the new covenant by God with the new Israel—the Church—whereby the grace of the law-giving Holy Spirit took the place of the law of Sinai.[1]

Opposite page: The Holy Trinity by Andrew Rublev. 44 x 55½ inches. Tretiakov Gallery, Moscow. Photo: UNESCO

Great Vespers, Stich. of Tone 8

Kneeling Prayer of St. Basil the Great in Great Vespers

If all three Persons of the Holy Trinity take part in the providential action of God in relation to the world and to man, their manifestations in this action differ from one another. We confess God the Father, Creator of the world visible and invisible, "doing all things through the Son with the participation of the Holy Spirit", God the Son, the Redeemer "through Whom we have known the Father and through Whom the Holy Spirit came into the world", and God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, "proceeding from the Father and resting in the Son" giving life to all living things. On the day of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles there was manifested the culminating action of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, as a sanctifying power, and this act is "the final fulfilment of the promise".[2] The descent of the Holy Spirit, proceeding from the Father and shed forth by God the Son (Acts ii, 33), revealed to the world the grace-given knowledge of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, consubstantial, undivided yet distinct. Together with the fulfilment of the promise, it is the fulfilment of the revelation concerning one God in three Persons, that is, the manifestation of the central dogma of Christianity. If, on the day of the Lord's baptism, the manifestation of the Holy Trinity was accessible only to external senses—John the Baptist heard the voice of the Father, saw the Son and the Holy Spirit descending in the physical form of a dove—to-day, the grace of the Holy Spirit, giving light to the whole being of man redeemed by the Son of God, brings him to deification.[3] According to the extent of his possibilities man receives the possibility of seeing God, and of participating in the Kingdom of grace of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Externally, the celebration of Pentecost, namely the decoration of churches and houses with green branches, plants and flowers, is also a relic of the Old Testament Church. It expresses symbolically the power of the Holy Spirit—reviving, renewing and giving life and blossom to all things.

In the Orthodox Church, where there is no feast of the Holy Trinity in a literal sense, it is celebrated mainly on the first day of Pentecost—the Sunday—which is called Trinity Day. Divine service on that day expounds the dogmatic teaching on the Holy Trinity, Whose icon is brought out for worship. The icon of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles is brought out on the second day—the Monday—which is dedicated to the Holy Spirit and is called the Spirit Day. Thus two icons, totally different in their meaning and significance, correspond to the feast of Pentecost.

[1] Synaxarion for Pentecost.

[2] St. Gregory the Theologian, Sermon 41 on Pentecost. P.G. 36, col. 436.

[3] St. Gregory the Theologian, ibid.

THE HOLY TRINITY

The expounding of the dogma of the Trinity is the fundamental theological theme of the festival of Pentecost. For its iconographical expression, the Orthodox Church has adopted the icon of the Holy Trinity representing the Biblical scene of three men appearing to our forefather Abraham by the oak of Mambre (Gen. xviii). To show that they belong to the heavenly world, they are depicted as three winged Angels. This image, based on a concrete historical event, shows the first appearance of God to man, signifying the beginning of the promise of redemption. Both the iconography and the Divine service link the beginning of this promise with its fulfilment on the day of the Pentecost, when the final revelation concerning the Holy Trinity is given. In other words, the icon of the Holy Trinity binds together, as it were, the beginning of the Old Testament Church and the establishment of the New Testament Church.

In the 5th book of "Demonstratio Evangelica" by Eusebius of Caesarea, quoted by John of Damascus in his third Discourse in defence of holy icons, in connection with the words "God appeared to Abraham by the oak of Mambre", we find mention of the fact that an image of the Holy Trinity, in the guise of three Angels, had existed in the most ancient times at the actual place where the three men had appeared to Abraham. The existence of this image is connected with the particular veneration, in which the place of the apparition by the oak was held both by Jews and pagans; pagan sacrifices also had been celebrated there.[1] We do not know what kind of image it was. However, from the most remote times the Holy Trinity was depicted as an historical Biblical scene, with the Angels sitting at table under the oak; Abraham and Sarah serve them, and their house is shown behind. A servant killing a calf was often depicted in the foreground. In spite of the fundamental uniformity of the scene, the grouping of the Angels changed in accordance with the interpretation given to this Biblical event, and with the dogmatic thought which had to be emphasised. For example, many Church Fathers understood the visitation of Abraham by the three men either as an appearance, however indirect, of the entire Trinity[2]; or as the appearance of the second Person of the Holy Trinity, accompanied by two angels.[3] Such an interpretation does not change the understanding of this event as an appearance of the Trinity, for, since each Person of the Trinity possesses the whole fullness of the Godhead, the presence of the Son with two angels can be taken as a representation of the Trinity. It is in this sense that the event is interpreted by the texts of the Divine service, which definitely call it the appearance of the Holy Trinity. "The blessed Abraham saw the Trinity, as far as man can, and regaled It as a good friend." "The holy Abraham welcomes of old the Godhead, Who is one in three Persons." In accordance with the teaching of the Church and the interpretation of the Fathers, the Angels are sometimes grouped on the isocephalous principle, that is, they are sitting at table side by side as equals in rank, thus demonstrating the equality of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity, which at the same time remain distinct (as for instance in the Vth century mosaic of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome and in the Cotton Bible of the same period in the British Museum in London). Moreover, their equality is sometimes emphasised by the identical colour of the angels' garments (as for instance in the VIth century mosaic of St. Vitalius at Ravenna)—and by their attributes. In other cases the composition has a pyramidal structure, putting the principal emphasis on the central Angel.

Canon of the Patriarchs' Sunday, Canticle 5

Canon of the service of the Holy Fathers, Canticle 1

For many centuries, the representation of the three Biblical men as Angels was the only iconography of the Holy Trinity; it is still preserved in the Orthodox Church as that which accords best with its teaching.[4]

The image of the Trinity, that corresponds most fully to the teaching of the Church as regards both its content and its artistic expression, is to be found in the greatest of works, known as the Trinity by Rublev, painted by him for the monastery of the Trinity and St. Sergius, probably between 1408 and 1425[5]; it is now in the Tretiakov Gallery in Moscow. As in other earlier icons of the Trinity, it depicts three Angels, but the circumstances of their appearance are passed over in silence. The painting shows Abraham's house, the oak and a mountain—but Abraham and Sarah are absent. Without abolishing the historical aspect of the event, St. Andrew reduced it to a minimum, so that the main significance lies not in the Biblical event, but in its dogmatic meaning. This icon is also distinguished from others by the basic form of its composition—a circle. Passing through the upper part of the nimbus of the central Angel and partly cutting off the bottom of the pedestals, this circle embraces all three figures, showing very faintly through their outlines. This composition of the Trinity had existed earlier, but only in panagias, or small round icons, and on the bottoms of sacred vessels, where, however, the composition is dictated by the shape of the object itself and the lack of free space, and not by the dogmatic thought. Having placed the figures of the Angels in a circle, St. Andrew united them in one general smooth and flowing movement along the line of the circle. In this way the central Angel, though taller than the others, does

See reproduction on page 198.

not overwhelm or dominate them. The nimbus of his inclined head, leaning away from the vertical axis of the circle, and the placing of the Angel's feet on the opposite side, emphasise still more this movement, which also includes the oak and the mountain. At the same time, the inclination of the nimbus and of the feet in opposing directions, restores the equilibrium of the composition, and the movement is arrested by the monumental immobility of the Angel on the left and Abraham's house above Him. And yet, "wherever we look, we see echoes of the main circular melody, correspondences of outline, forms arising from other forms or reflecting them as in a mirror, lines sweeping beyond the outlines of the circle or interwoven in its centre—a rich symphony of forms, dimensions, lines and colours, inexpressible in words, but delighting the eye."[6]

The icon of St. Andrew has action, expressed in gestures, communion, expressed in the inclining of the heads and the postures of the figures, and a silent, motionless peace. This inner life, uniting the three figures enclosed in the circle and communicating itself to its surroundings, reveals the whole inexhaustible depth of this image. It echoes, as it were, the words of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, according to whose interpretation "circular movement signifies that God remains identical with Himself, that He envelops in synthesis the intermediate parts and the extremities, which are at the same time containers and contained, and that He recalls to Himself all that has gone forth from Him."[7] If the angle of the heads and bodies of the two Angels inclined towards the central one bind them together, the gestures of their hands are directed towards the eucharistic chalice, with the head of a sacrificial animal, which stands on the white table as on an altar. Symbolising the voluntary sacrifice of the Son of God, it draws together the gestures of the Angels, indicating the unity of will and action of the Holy Trinity, Who entered into a covenant with Abraham.

The almost identical faces and figures of the Angels emphasise the single nature of the three Divine Persons and also show that this icon in no way pretends to represent concretely each Person of the Holy Trinity. Just as in the case of other, earlier, icons it is not a representation of the Trinity itself, that is, of the three Persons of the Godhead, since in its essence the Godhead cannot be represented. It is still the same historical scene (although the historical aspect is reduced to a minimum), which symbolically reveals the unity and the trinity of the Godhead by showing its triune action in the world, the Divine Economy. This is why, despite the likeness of the Angels, they are not deprived of individuality, the character of each being definitely expressed as regards His action in the world.

The Angels are grouped on the icon in the order of the Symbol of Faith, from left to right: I believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.[8] To the total impossibility of depicting the first Person, Who is referred to even in the Symbol of Faith in a reserved and reticent manner, corresponds the sober and indefinite hue of the upper garment of the Angel on the left (a pale pink cloak with brown and blue-green lights). Testimony concerning the second Person is extensive compared with the others and even precise to the point of historical indication (in the time of Pontius Pilate); to this there corresponds the precision and clarity of colouring in the central Angel, whose garment has the customary colours of the incarnated Son of God (a purple chiton and a blue cloak). Finally, the principal colour of the third Angel is green—the colour of his cloak—which, according to the interpretation of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, signifies "youth, fullness of powers".[9] This specifically indicates the properties of the third Person of the Holy Trinity, renewing all things and giving them life. The subtly conceived harmony and relationship of colours of the icon of the Holy Trinity by St. Andrew is one of its chief attractions. The cornflower blue of the cloak of the central Angel has extraordinary vividness and purity and when combined with wings the colour of ripe corn, it is particularly striking. The clear and precise colours of the central Angel are contrasted with the soft hues of the other two; but even in them bright blue areas glow here and there like precious stones. Unifying the three figures by their colouring, Rublev seems to point to the single nature of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, and also gives



the whole icon a tranquil and lucid joyfulness. Thus the colour-harmony of this icon echoes the same life as fills its images, forms and lines. "Here are, at the same time, emphasis on the centre, contrasts of colours, an equilibrium of the parts, its complement in hues, and gradual transitions leading the eye away from the rich colouring to the gleam of gold (the background). And over it all the glow of pure blue, serene like a cloudless sky."[10] This icon, with its inexhaustible content, its harmonious equilibrium of composition, majestically calm figures of the Angels, light, joyous summer colours could be the creation only of a man who had stilled in his soul all agitation and doubt and was illumined by the light of knowledge of God.

See reproduction on page 203. The Holy Trinity, Russian, end of XVth century. Russian Museum, Leningrad. Photograph, N. P. Kondakov

The icon of St. Andrew remains to this day a classical example of the iconography of the Holy Trinity. Tradition preserves alike its basic colours and the individual details of outline and composition. Another remarkable image of the Holy Trinity reproduced here (p. 203) is obviously a replica of Rublev's icon. This icon is in the Russian Museum in Leningrad and is supposed to have been painted not later than the end of the XVth century.[11] Here are the same lines and postures of the Angels, though they are grouped not in a circle but on an almost straight line, with the central figure only slightly emphasised. The figures, practically without shoulders, are still more effeminate than in the original. The composition is more static and the figures of the Angels are united together rather by tone than by movement. The fundamental colours of the garments are preserved, but are more subdued and uniform. The general tone of this icon is not bright and clear as in Rublev, but restrained and warm. Owing to the emphatic treatment of the background, the whole scene is brought as it were nearer to earth, and the image, revealed to St. Andrew in its ineffable majesty, here becomes more approachable and intimate.

[1] The sacrifical stone and the oak were destroyed by Constantine, and a Christian basilica was built on this place.

[2] For example, St. Cyril of Alexandria—in the first discourse against Julian the Apostate. P.G. 76, coll. 532–533. St. Ambrose of Milan, *De Excessu Fratris sui satyri*. Lib. II; P.L. 16, col. 1342.

[3] St. John Chrysostom, *Discourse on Genesis* (P.G. 54, col. 38). St. John of Damascus, who quotes Eusebius of Caesarea, says: "The strangers welcomed by Abraham are depicted as reclining. One is on either side, and in the centre one more mighty and of a higher rank. The one shown in the centre is the Lord, our Saviour Himself..." (3rd *Discourse in Defence of Holy icons*. Appendix.)

[4] Although the representation of God the Father, as an old man, with the child—Christ—on His lap and the Holy Spirit as a dove, either between them or on a discus, held by the Saviour, bears the title of "Fatherhood" (this representation transposes the doctrine of the *Filioque* into pictorial form); it is still a representation of the Trinity, in so far as it strives to depict the three divine Persons. Consequently, without entering into an analysis of its meaning, we should say a few words about it. This theme originated in Byzantium. The earliest representation of this kind known to us is an illustration to the writings of St. John of the Ladder, in a Greek manuscript belonging to the beginning of the XIth century (now in the Vatican Library, Ms. grec. 394, fol. 7). Later it passed to the West, where it was accepted as an iconography of the Holy Trinity, and thence to Russia. In Russian iconography, it served as the start of those distortions, which followed later under the influence of the West. This representation was forbidden by the Great Moscow Council of 1667 in the following terms: "To represent the God of Sabaoth (that is, the Father) on icons with a grey beard, with His Only Son on His lap, and a dove between Them, is exceedingly absurd and unseemly, since no one has seen God the Father. For the Father has no flesh, and it was not in the flesh that the Son was born from the Father before all ages; although the Prophet David says: 'I have begotten thee from the womb before the morning' (Ps. cix, 3)—yet this birth is not in the flesh, but is beyond all understanding or expression. And Christ Himself says in the Holy Gospel: 'Neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son...' This birth, before all ages, of the only-begotten Son from the Father should be understood by the mind, but must not and cannot be represented on icons." (*Acts of Moscow Councils 1666–1667*. Moscow, 1893. *On icon-painters and the Lord of Sabaoth*, c. 44.) Both the iconography of this image, borrowed from the iconography of the Virgin, and the title "Fatherhood", show it to be an attempt to represent the pre-eternal birth from the Father, in addition to the human birth from the Mother. But this birth, which is beyond all understanding, is represented as being the birth, in the bosom of the undepictable Father, of the Child, who was born in the flesh from the Mother, and this introduces into the Holy Trinity an anthropomorphical element. Consequently the Council condems such a representation as a fiction, corresponding neither to the teaching of the Orthodox Church nor to any historical reality. (As to images of the Holy Spirit as a dove, see footnote to the commentary on the icon of the Lord's baptism.)

Moreover, there appeared in the XVIth century another iconography of Western origin, also based on imagination, called "Godhead in Three Persons", depicting God the Father and the Saviour sitting side by side, with a dove between Them. The title again shows an attempt to depict God the Father and the Holy Spirit in physical form.

[5] I. Grabar, *Problems of Restoration.* Moscow, 1926, p. 100.

[6] M. Alpatov, *Andrew Rublev*, p. 19. Moscow-Leningrad, 1943.

[7] *On Divine Names*, P.G. 3, col. 916D.

[8] The grouping of the Angels led at times to a misplaced precision, amounting to downright distortion. Thus, before Rublev and after him, the central Angel, which seems always to have been understood by icon-painters as the second Person, was often singled out by a cross within the nimbus with the inscription "Jesus Christ" and a scroll in his hand, instead of a staff. Perhaps in opposition to these distortions, and in Russia in particular against the heresy of Judaisers, who denied the Orthodox teaching on the Holy Trinity, there appeared, though seldom, distortions of a different order: not one, but all three Angels were represented with a cross within the nimbus. Although the singling out of the central Angel has a certain basis in principle in the interpretations of the holy Fathers mentioned above, it is incorrect when applied to the representation, since it involves applying the name of God-Man to an image, which is not His direct and concrete representation. "When the Word became flesh, It... was given the name of Jesus Christ" says John of Damascus (On the Orthodox Faith, IV, c. 6; P.G. 94, col. 1112BC). As regards the nimbus with a cross, in this case the other Persons of the Holy Trinity are given the attribute of the Lord's Passion, thus ascribing to them a virtual participation in the specific economy of the Second Person. The question of the inscription and the cruciferous nimbus was brought forward by Tsar John the Terrible at the Council of 1551 in Moscow, called the Council of the Hundred Chapters. In reply, the Council ordained that this image should be painted in the manner of the ancient icon-painters and of Andrew Rublev, that is, without the cross in the nimbus, and should be "entitled 'The Holy Trinity', and nothing should be done from one's own invention" (N. V. Pokrovsky, "*Relics of Christian iconography*", St.Petersburg, 1910, p. 289, in Russian).

[9] *The Celestial Hierarchy*, c. 15, par. 7.

[10] M. Alpatov, ibid.

[11] N. P. Kondakov, *The Russian Icon*, vol. 4, part 2. Prague, 1933.



THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Russian, Novgorod school, XVth century. 22½ x 36 inches. Photo: A La Vieille Russie, New York

With the Ascension "the works of Christ while in the flesh finish, or rather the works relating to His physical sojourn on earth; and the works of the Spirit commence", says Gregory the Theologian.[1] These works of the Spirit begin by the fulfilment of the "promise of the Father" (Acts i, 4) in the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles on the day of Pentecost. After worshipping the Holy Trinity on the first day of the festival (Sunday), the Church offers, on the following day, special worship to the Holy Spirit, Who descended visibly on Christ's disciples.

Although the Acts of the Apostles (Acts, ii, 1–13) say that the descent of the Holy Spirit was accompanied by a sound and by general perturbation, the icon shows us the reverse – an harmonious order and strict composition. In contrast to the Ascension, where the Apostles are gesticulating, here their postures express an hieratic calm, their movements are full ot solemnity. They are seated; and some turn a little towards one another, as though talking.

In order to understand the contradiction between the text of the Acts and the composition of the icon, one should bear in mind that the icon is addressed to the faithful and so shows not what external, uninitiated people saw at this event, which made them assert that the Apostles were "full of new wine", but what is revealed to the participants of this event, to members of the Church—that is, its inner meaning. Pentecost is the baptism of the Church by fire. Being the fulfilment of the revelation concerning the Holy Trinity, it represents the culminating moment of the formation of the Church, unfolding its life in the fullness of its grace-given gifts and institutions. If the icon of the Holy Trinity gives an indication of the mystery of God's being, the icon of the Descent of the Holy Spirit reveals the providential action of the Holy Trinity in relation to the Church and the world. "At Pentecost it is not by His action that the Spirit is present as formerly (in the prophets and in Christ's disciples prior to the descent of the Holy Spirit), but He is substantially present, cohabiting and co-existing."[2]

The Divine service of that day contrasts the confusion of tongues in Babylon to their harmonious union on the day of the Descent of the Holy Spirit. "When the All-Highest, descending, confounded the tongues, He divided the nations; but when He distributed the tongues of fire, He called all men to unity; wherefore with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit."

Kontakion, Tone 8 Holy Pentecost

For the Fathers of the Church[3] say that it was necessary that the peoples, who had lost their unity of tongue and were dispersed during the building of the earthly tower, should once more recover this unity and should be collected together in the spiritual building of the Church, fused into its single holy body by the fire of love. "Thus, according to the likeness of the Holy Trinity, undivided and distinct, there is formed a new being, the holy Church, one in its being, but multiple in persons, whose head is Christ and whose members are angels, prophets, apostles, martyrs and all those who have repented in faith."[4] This unity in the likeness of the Holy Trinity, this clear and precise inner structure of the Church—its single body filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit—is indeed shown to us in the icon of the Pentecost. The twelve Apostles, together forming a definite figure—a semicircle—are a beautiful expression of the unity of the body of the Church, with all the multiplicity of its members. Everything here is subjected to a strict and majestic rhythm, which is the more strongly emphasised by the fact that the Apostles are represented in inverse perspective—their figures grow bigger as they recede from the foreground. Their grouping is completed by an empty, unoccupied place—the place of the invisible Head of the Church, that is Christ. This is the reason why some ancient images of the Pentecost are completed by an *ἑτοιμασία*—an altar prepared, a symbol of the invisible presence of God. Some (the Evangelists) hold books in their hands, others scrolls, as a sign of their having received the gift of teaching. Out of the segment of the circle, that goes beyond the edge of the panel, and symbolises heaven, there descend upon them twelve rays or tongues of fire, as a sign of baptism with the Holy Spirit and with fire, according to the prophesy of John the Forerunner (Matt. iii, 11), and a sign too of their sanctification. Sometimes small tongues of fire are also placed on the haloes, immediately over the heads of the Apostles. This shows that the Holy Spirit descended in the form of tongues,

which alighted "on the heads of the Apostles, as a sign of sanctification both of the principal controlling member of the body and of the mind itself" and "showing that the Holy Spirit reposes in the saints".[5]

The inner unity expressed by subordinating the Apostles to a single form and a common rhythm in no way stamps them with uniformity. No movement in one figure is repeated in another. This absence of uniformity corresponds also to the inner meaning of the event. "The Holy Spirit appears in the shape of separate tongues, owing to the diversity of gifts", says Gregory the Theologian.[6] Consequently He descended upon every member of the Church separately and, although there is "one and the selfsame Spirit", "there are diversities of gifts..." and "there are diversities of operations...". "To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge... to another the gifts of healing..." and so forth (1 Cor. xii, 4-31).

Tradition says that, to fulfil the prophecy of Joel (Joel ii, 28-29), the Holy Spirit descended not only on the twelve chosen Apostles, but also upon all those who were with them "with one accord in one place" (Acts ii, 1), that is, on the whole Church. This is why on our icon there are represented Apostles not belonging to the twelve—Apostle Paul (sitting with Apostle Peter at the head of the circle of Apostles), and among the seventy, Luke the Evangelist (third from the top on the left) and Mark the Evangelist (third from the top on the right).

In ancient manuscripts, the multitude, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, is represented at the bottom of the composition. Yet very soon it was replaced by one symbolical figure of a King, personifying the people or peoples, with the inscription "Cosmos". An explanation of this figure can be found in the collections of the XVIIth century—"Why at the descent of the Holy Spirit is there shown a man sitting in a dark place, bowed down with years, dressed in a red garment with a royal crown on his head, and in his hands a white cloth containing twelve written scrolls? The man sits in a dark place, since the whole world had formerly been without faith; he is bowed down with years, for he was made old by the sin of Adam; his red garment signifies the devil's blood sacrifices; the royal crown signifies sin, which ruled in the world; the white cloth in his hands with the twelve scrolls means the twelve Apostles, who brought light to the whole world with their teaching."[7]

The icon reproduced here belongs to the best period of Russian iconography and represents one of the best examples of an icon of Pentecost[8], expressing most fully the ecclesiological meaning of the festival connected with the central dogma of Christianity—the triune God. The life of the Church is connected in a fundamental way with this dogma; for triunity, that is singleness of nature and multiplicity of persons, is the principle according to which the Church lives and builds the Kingdom of God upon earth. Both its canonical structure and the principle of all Christian structure (Church community, monastery, etc.) is a reflection on the earthly plane of the Divine triune life. Thus it is that both of the icons brought out for worship at the festival of Pentecost are, in their essence, an image of the inner life of the Church.

[1] St. Gregory the Theologian, Discourse 41; P.G. 36, col. 436.

[2] St. Gregory the Theologian, Discourse 41; P.G. 36.

[3] St. Gregory the Theologian, Discourse 41; P.G. 36, and St. Gregory of Nyssa, In praise of the holy martyr Stephen.

[4] Archbishop Anthony, Collected Works, vol. II, pp. 75-76.

[5] St. Gregory the Theologian, ibid.

[6] St. Gregory the Theologian, ibid.

[7] N. Pokrovsky, *The Gospels in Iconographic Records*, St. Petersburg, 1892, p. 463.

[8] A detailed description of this icon is given by P. P. Muratov in his book, *Trente-cinq Primitifs Russes*, Paris, 1931.



The Transfiguration, from a Greek manuscript, XIth century, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris (Grec 74, fol. 28)

THE TRANSFIGURATION

"Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark ix, 1; cf. Matthew xvi, 28: "The Son of man coming in his kingdom").

What follows in the accounts of the synoptics (Mark ix, 2–9: Matthew xvii, 1–9; Luke ix, 27–36) shows us the Apostles, Peter, James and John become in their lifetimes witnesses of this "Power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ", "eye witnesses (*ἐπόπται*) of His Majesty" (2 Peter i, 16–18).

What is it that the three disciples were able to contemplate, when they saw the face of Christ "shine as the sun" and His raiment "white as the light" when a "bright cloud overshadowed them" (Matthew xvii, 2, 5)? According to St. Gregory of Nazianzus this light was the Divinity (*θεότης*) manifested to the disciples on the mountain.[1] St. John Damascene, speaking of this "splendour of the Divine nature"[2], of this "a-temporal glory (*ἄχρονος δόξα*) of God the Son"[3], observes that the comparison made by the Evangelists with the light of the sun remains quite inadequate, for uncreated reality cannot be expressed by a created image.[4] The matter in question, then, is the vision of God and it is evident why, from St. Irenaeus of Lyon[5] to Philaret of Moscow[6], the theme of the Transfiguration of Christ has never ceased to feed the thought of the Fathers and theologians of the Church. The Councils of the XIVth century (1341, 1347 and 1351–52) had to make it their special concern, in formulating the orthodox definition of grace, founded on the dogmatic distinction between the inaccessible essence and the communicable energy of God. St. Gregory Palamas (died 1359), in defending the traditional teaching on the Lord's Transfiguration against the attacks of certain rationalist theologians, well understood how to give full value to the im-



portance of this evangelical event for Christian dogma and spirituality. "God is called Light", he said, "not according to His Essence, but according to His energy."[7] The light which illumined the Apostles was not something sensible[8], but on the other hand it is equally false to see in it an intelligible reality, which would be called "light" only metaphorically.[9] The Divine Light is neither material nor spiritual, for it transcends the order of the created, it is the "ineffable splendour of the one nature in three hypostases".[10] "The light of the Lord's Transfiguration had no beginning and no end; it remained uncircumscribed (in time and space) and imperceptible to the senses, although it was contemplated with bodily eyes... but by a transmutation of their senses the disciples of the Lord passed from the flesh to the Spirit."[11]

Christ appeared to the disciples, not in kenotic form, as "servant", but in the "form of God"[12], as an Hypostasis of the Trinity Who, in His Incarnation, remains inseparable from His Divine nature, which is common to the Father and the Holy Spirit. The manifestation of the Divinity of Christ is then, at the same time, a theophany of the Trinity: "The Father... by His voice bore witness to His beloved Son; the Holy Spirit, shining with Him in the bright cloud, indicated that the Son possesses with the Father the light, which is one like all that belongs to Their richness."[13] First Christ showed the glory of His Divinity to the extent that the Apostles could receive the grace of this vision, but afterwards, the brilliance of the "bright cloud" overwhelmed their powers. Christ became invisible and the disciples fell in terror.[14] The kontakion of the festival (Tone 7), summing up the teaching of the Fathers, tells us that the Divine Glory of Christ was manifested to the disciples "according to their capacity", so that later, when they should see their Master crucified, they should be able to understand that the Passion of Him, Who is "in truth the splendour of the Father", could only be voluntary.

The feast of the Transfiguration (August 6th) must be very ancient, although Aetheria did not yet know it at the end of the IVth century. However Nicephorus Callixtus[15] claims that St. Helen had built a church on Mount Tabor in 326[16]; this seems to have been confirmed by excavations.[17] Numerous homilies on the Transfiguration lead one to think that it was celebrated in the East well before the VIIIth century, when it appears as already a great solemnity, endowed with a canon by St. John Damascene.[18] In the West, the Transfiguration has been commemorated, since antiquity, on the second Sunday of Lent.[19] The festival of August 6th appears only in the middle of the IXth century in Spain, and for long remained almost unknown, despite the efforts of Cluny in the XIIth century to propagate it.[20] It was to be recognised as a festival of the church only in 1475, by Pope Clement III. Unlike the Christian East, the West considers the Transfiguration as a festival of secondary rank (without octave).

In iconography, the symbolical images of the Transfiguration (St. Apollinare in Classe at Ravenna, VIth century), were supplanted very early by direct representations of the evangelical event. But the Gospel gives two accounts of the Transfiguration. According to the version in Mark and Matthew, the Apostles fell after having heard the voice of the Father and seen the bright cloud. According to Luke—they awoke from their sleep and saw the glory of the Christ. This latter version is to be found, for example, in the fresco of Toqale, in Cappadocia (IXth–Xth century), where the Apostles are represented seated. The two versions were to be fused together in the commentary of St. John Chrysostom[21]: one will see in the "sleep" (St. Luke) the stupefaction produced by the vision. It is in this sense that Nicolas Mesarites (XIIth century) describes the mosaic of the Transfiguration in the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople.[22] The attitudes of the Apostles vary. But, starting with the XIth century, St. Peter will always be represented kneeling, supported on his left hand, and raising his right hand to protect himself from the light (or to make a gesture accompanying the words that he addresses to Christ). St. John (always in the centre) falls, turning his back to the light. St. James flees before the light or falls backwards. In the XIIIth century, icons are more frequently met, which aim to accentuate the expressive attitudes of the

*Opposite page:
The Transfiguration.
Russian,
Novgorod school.
XVth century.
31¼ x 33½ inches.
Photo: Christies,
New York*

Apostles: they fall precipitately from the rugged summit, overwhelmed by the vision. This iconographic type became general in the XIVth century, at the time of the controversy over the Light of Tabor: the intention was to underline, in iconography, the uncreated character of the Light of the Transfiguration. It is this that we see in the icon reproduced here (Russsian, XVth century): St. Peter has fallen on his knees; so has St. John; St. James has fallen on his back, still looking at Christ, but protecting his eyes with his hand.

Christ transfigured is represented standing on the summit of the mountain, speaking with Moses and Elias. His raiment is shining white. The geometrical figure (in our icon it is a hexagon) inscribed in the circle of the mandorla, must represent the "bright cloud" which revealed the transcendant source of the Divine energies. The three rays pointed down upon the apostles are an indication that the action in the Transfiguration is trinitarian (we often see this symbol in other icons, such as the Annunciation, the Theophany, and others). Moses (on the right) in our icon is holding a book; generally it is the tables of the Decalogue—Elias (on the left) is an old man with long hair. St. John Chrysostom[23] gives several reasons to explain the presence of Moses and Elias at the moment of the Transfiguration. 1. they represent the law and the prophets; 2. both had had a secret vision of God, one on Mt. Sinai, the other on Carmel; 3. Moses represents the dead, whilst Elias, taken up to heaven on a chariot of fire, represents the living. This last interpretation has been emphasised above all in liturgical texts, and has sometimes found expression in iconography: thus at Nereditza, on an image of the XVIth or XVIIth century, an angel is drawing Moses from the tomb, another is making Elias emerge from a cloud. This insistence is comprehensible; it underlines the eschatological character of the Transfiguration. Christ appears as the Lord of the quick and the dead, coming in the glory of the future age. The Transfiguration was "an anticipation of His glorious Second Coming", says St. Basil[24]: the moment which opened a perspective of eternity in time.

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 5
Vespers, Stich. of Tone 4 and Tone 1: comparison between Sinai (unseen mystery) and Tabor (mystery made manifest)
Vespers, stich. of Tone 4 and Tone 2;
Matins, Stich. of Tone 4

[1] Sermon (40) on the Baptism. P.G. 36, col. 365A.

[2] Homily on the Transfiguration. P.G. 96, col. 552B.

[3] Ibid. col. 560D.

[4] Ibid. col. 565A.

[5] Adv. Haer. IV, 20, 2 and 9; P.G. 7, coll. 1033 and 1039.

[2] 12th Sermon (a. 1820), Works (ed. 1873) 1, 97 et seq.

[7] Against Akindynos (table of contents published in Migne) VI, 9 in P.G. 150, col. 823.

[8] Ibid. IV, 20. col. 818.

[9] Ibid. VII, 8. col. 826.

[10] Homily 35; P.G. 151, col. 448D.

[11] Homily 34. Ibid. col. 429A. On the theology of the Transfiguration according to Gregory Palamas, see Father Basil Krivoshein, *The Ascetical and Theological Teaching of Gregory Palamas*. Eastern Churches Quarterly, vol. III, 1938.

[12] Phil. ii, 6–7, cf. St. Leo of Rome, Sermon 51; P.L. 54, col. 312C.

[13] St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 34; P.G. 151, col. 425CD. Cf. the parallel between the theophany of the Trinity at Christ's Baptism and that of the Transfiguration.

[14] St. Gregory Palamas, Homily 35. Ibid. coll. 444–445.

[15] Hist. eccles., 1, VIII, c. 30; P.G. 146, col. 113CD.

[16] An ancient opinion (Origen, Commentary on Ps. lxxxviii, sec. 13; P.G. 12, col. 1548D), which became common, would identify the "high mountain" of the Transfiguration with Mount Tabor. However, the data of the Scriptures make one think rather of Hermon.

[17] Père Barnabé d'Alsace. *Le Mont Thabor* (Paris, 1900), pp. 58–61, 133–154.

[18] P.G. 96, coll. 848–852.

[19] By a curious coincidence, the Orthodox Church later consecrated this day to the memory of St. Gregory Palamas.

[20] Batiffol, *Histoire du Bréviaire Romain*, p. 163.

[21] On Matthew, Homily 56; P.G. 58, coll. 552–553.

[22] A. Heisenberg, *Grabeskirche und Apostelkirche, Zwei Basiliken Konstantins* (Leipzig, 1908), Pt. 2, pp. 32–37.

[23] Op. cit. P.G. 58, coll. 550–551.

[24] Homily on Ps. xliv, sec. 5; P.G. 29, col. 400CD.

The feast of the Dormition (κοίμησις) of the Mother of God, known in the West under the name of the Assumption, comprises two distinct but inseparable moments for the faith of the Church: firstly, the Death and Burial, and second, the Resurrection and Ascension of the Mother of God. The Orthodox East has known how to respect the mysterious character of this event which, unlike the Resurrection of Christ, was not made a subject of apostolic preaching. In fact, there is here a mystery, not destined for the ears of "those without", but revealed to the inner consciousness of the Church. For those who are affirmed in faith in the Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord, it is evident that, if the Son of God assumed His human nature in the womb of the Virgin, She Who served the Incarnation had in Her turn to be assumed into the glory of Her Son risen and ascended to Heaven. "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thine holiness."[1] "The grave and death" could not retain the "Mother of Life", for Her Son has transported Her (μετέστησεν) into the life of the future age.

Kontakion, Tone 2

The glorification of the Mother is a direct result of the voluntary humiliation of the Son: the Son of God is incarnate of the Virgin Mary and is made "Son of Man", capable of dying, whilst Mary, becoming the Mother of God, receives the "glory which belongs to God" (θεοπρεπὴς δόξα) and is the first among human beings to participate in the final deification of the creature. "God became man, that man might become God."[2] The significance of the Incarnation of the Word thus appears at the end of Mary's life on earth. "Wisdom is justified of her children." The glory of the age to come, the last end of man, is already realised, not only in a Divine Hypostasis made flesh, but also in a human person made God. This passage from death to life, from time to eternity, from terrestrial condition to celestial beatitude establishes the Mother of God beyond the general Resurrection and the Last Judgment, beyond the Second Coming which will end the history of the world. The feast of August 15th is a second mysterious Easter, since the Church therein celebrates, before the end of time, the secret first-fruit of its eschatological consummation. This explains the soberness of the liturgical text which, in the office of the Dormition, permits a glimpse of the ineffable glory of the Assumption of the Mother of God.[3]

Vespers,
Stich. of Tone 1

The feast of the Dormition probably originated in Jerusalem. However, at the end of the IVth century, Aetheria did not yet know it. It can nevertheless be supposed that this solemnity was not slow in appearing, since in the VIth century it was already widespread; St. Gregory of Tours is the first witness of the feast of the Assumption in the West[4], where it was originally celebrated in January.[5] Under the Emperor Maurice (582 to 602) the date of the feast was definitely fixed as August 15th.[6]

Among the first iconographic monuments of the Assumption must be noticed the sarcophagus of Santa Ingracia at Saragossa (beginning of the IVth century) with a scene which is very probably that of the Assumption[7], and a relief of the VIth century, in the Basilica of Bolniss-Kapanakči, in Georgia, which represents the Ascension of the Mother of God and is matched by a relief of the Ascension of Christ.[8] The apocryphal account which circulated under the name of St. Melito (IInd century) was not earlier than the beginning of the Vth century.[9] It is full of legendary details of the death, the resurrection and the ascension of the Mother of God, dubious information that the Church will take care to avoid. Thus, St. Modestus of Jerusalem (died 634), in his "Praise on the Dormition"[10], is very restrained in the details which he gives: he notes the presence of the Apostles "brought from afar, by an inspiration from on high", the appearance of Christ, come to raise the soul of His Mother, finally, the return to life of the Mother of God, "in order to participate corporally in the eternal incorruption of Him, Who brought Her forth from the tomb and drew Her to Himself in a manner that He alone knew". The homily of St. John of Thessalonica (died circa 630) as well as other more recent homilies—of St. Andrew of Crete, St. Germanos of Constantinople, St. John Damascene[11]—are more rich in details, which were to enter both into the liturgy and into the iconography of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

The classical type of the Dormition in orthodox iconography is habitually limited to representing the Mother of God lying on Her deathbed, in the midst of the Apostles, and

Christ in glory receiving in His arms the soul of His Mother. However, sometimes there has been a desire to show equally the moment of the bodily assumption: one then sees, at the top of the icon, above the scene of the Dormition, the Mother of God seated on a throne in the "mandorla" that angels are carrying towards the heavens.

In our icon (Russian, XVIth century) Christ in glory surrounded by a "mandorla" is looking at the body of His Mother stretched on a litter. He is holding on His left arm a small figure of a child clothed in white and crowned with a halo: it is the "all-luminous soul" that He has just gathered up. The twelve Apostles, "standing around the bed, look on with terror" at the decease of the Mother of God. It is easy to recognise, in the foreground, St. Peter and St. Paul on either side of the couch. On some icons there is shown at the top, in the sky, the moment of the miraculous arrival of the Apostles, assembled "from the ends of the earth, on the clouds". The multitude of angels present at the Dormition sometimes forms an outer border around the "mandorla" of Christ. On our icon, the heavenly virtues, accompanying Christ, are indicated by a seraphim with six wings, two cherubim and two angels in the mandorla. Four bishops with haloes stand behind the Apostles. They are St. James, "the brother of the Lord", the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and three disciples of the Apostles: Timothy, Hierotheus and Dionysious the Areopagite, who had come with St. Paul.[12] Sometimes groups of women represent the faithful of Jerusalem who, with the bishops and the Apostles, form the inner circle of the Church in which is accomplished the mystery of the Dormition of the Mother of God.

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 5

Vespers, Stich. of Tone 6

Kontakion, Tone 2

Kontakion, Tone 2

The episode of Athonios, a fanatical Jew, who had both hands cut off by the sword of an angel, for having dared to touch the funeral couch of the Mother of God, figures in the majority of the icons of the Dormition. The presence of this apocryphal detail in the liturgy and in the iconography of the feast is to recall that the end of the life on earth of the Mother of God is an intimate mystery of the Church which must not be exposed to profanation: inaccessible to the view of those without, the glory of the Dormition of Mary can be contemplated only in the inner light of Tradition.

Troparion, Ode 3

Opposite page: The Dormition. Russian, XVIth century. 11½ x 9½ inches. Photo: Temple Gallery, London

[1] Psalm cxxxi, 8, which recurs many times in the office of the "Dormition".

[2] St. Irenaeus, St Athanasius, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Gregory of Nyssa (P. G. 7, col. 1120; 25, col. 192; 37, col. 465; 45, col. 65) and other Fathers of the Church.

[3] The office of the "Burial of the Mother of God" (August 17th), is of very late origin, and is on the contrary too explicit; it is copied from the Matins of Holy Saturday ("Burial of Christ").

[4] De gloria martyrum, Miracula 1, 4 and 9; P. L. 71, coll. 708 and 713.

[5] The Bobbio Missal and the Gallican Sacramentary indicate January 18th as the date.

[6] Nicephorus Callistus, Hist. eccles. XVII, c. 28; P. G. 147, col. 292.

[7] Dom Cabrol, *Dict. d'archéol. chrét.*, vol. 1, pp. 2990-2994.

[8] S. Amiranaschwili, *History of Georgian art*, p. 128, Moscow, 1950 (in Russian).

[9] P. G. 5, coll. 1231-1240.

[10] Encomium, P. G. 86, coll. 3277-3312.

[11] Patrologia Orientalis XIX, 375-438; P. G. 97, coll. 1045-1109; 98, coll. 340-372; 96, coll. 700-761.

[12] See the passage on the Dormition in the *Divine Names* of Dionysius the Areopagite, III, sec. 2; P. G. 3, col. 681.



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Ouspensky, Leonid
The Meaning of icons





THE MEANING OF ICONS

REVISED EDITION

In the last decades the art of icons has gained increased attention. Once icons were passed over by the art critics, or at most classified as popular art, although painters such as Matisse or Picasso went to Russia especially for the sake of studying this art. Most recently many books have been published on icon painting. Yet the present work is the first of its kind to give a reliable introduction into the spiritual background of this art.

The nature of the icon cannot be grasped by means of pure art criticism, nor by the adoption of a sentimental point of view. Its forms are based on the wisdom contained in the theological and liturgical writings of the Eastern Orthodox Church and are intimately bound up with the experience of contemplative life.

The introduction into the meaning and the language of the icons by Ouspensky imparts to us in an admirable way the spiritual conceptions of the Eastern Orthodox Church which are often so foreign to us, but without the knowledge of which we cannot possibly understand the world of the icon.

"It is not the purpose of the icon to touch its contemplator. Neither is it its purpose to recall one or the other human experience of natural life; it is meant to lead every human sentiment as well as reason and all other qualities of human nature on the way to illumination."

"The entire visible world as depicted in the icon is to foreshadow the coming Unity of the whole creation, of the Kingdom of the Holy Ghost."

The theological justification of the icon was derived by the VIIth Oecumenical Council from the fact of the Incarnation of God. God became human for the elation and deification of Man. This deification becomes visible in the Saints. The Byzantine theologian often sets the calling of an icon-painter on an equal level with that of a priest. Devoted to the service of a more sublime reality, he exercises his objective duty the same way as the liturgical priest. The "spiritual genuineness" of the icon, the cryptic, almost sacral power to convince, is not alone due to accurate observation of the iconographic canon, but also to the ascetic fervor of the painter.

A very interesting section on the technique of icon-painting is followed by the main part of the book, in which both authors describe the most important types of icons. Apart from a detailed description of the icon screen *(ikonostas)* of the Russian Church, 58 types are explained with the aid of an equal number of illustrations, amongst which there are alone 10 various representatives of the Virgin. Special mention is due to 51 icons reproduced in their complete colorful splendor.

The selection of subjects made in order to reveal the main features of Orthodox iconography was naturally limited to the examples available outside Russia. But this not in the least diminishes the value of the book; on the contrary, it led to the reproduction of many beautiful icons which had never been published before or had been unknown to a wider public. A considerable number of museums and private collectors in Europe and America spontaneously placed their collections at the disposal of the authors.

The size of the book is 12 x 9 inches. It includes 160 pages of text with drawings, 13 black and white and 51 full color plates. It is linen-cloth and paper bound.

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